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ABSTRACT

The 2001 District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs is a national study of public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of educational failure. It provides data on topics related to the availability of public alternative schools and programs, enrollment, staffing, and services for students. This report is based on questionnaire data from a nationally representative sample of 1,534 public school districts. Overall, 39 percent of public school districts administered at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students during the 2000-01 school year. Nearly 60 percent of these schools and programs were housed in separate facilities. About 12 percent of all students in these schools and programs were special education students with Individualized Education Programs. Student enrollment in public alternative schools and programs was highly fluid, with students removed from and returned to regular schools on an individual and daily basis. The most likely reasons for determining eligibility to return to regular school were improved attitude or behavior and student motivation to return. Most districts with alternative schools and programs hired teachers specifically to teach in them. The type of collaboration most widely reported by districts with alternative schools and programs was with the juvenile justice system. (Contains 4 figures, 14 tables, and 15 references.) (SM)

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Public Alternative Schools and Programs for Students At Risk of Education Failure: 2000–01

Statistical Analysis Report

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
NCES 2002-004

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Public Alternative Schools and Programs for Students At Risk of Education Failure: 2000–01

Statistical Analysis Report

September 2002

FRSS
Fast Response Survey System

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Concern among the public, educators, and policymakers about violence, weapons, and drugs on elementary and secondary school campuses, balanced with concern about sending disruptive and potentially dangerous students "out on the streets," has spawned an increased interest in alternative schools and programs (U.S. Department of Education 1996). Many students who, for one reason or another, are not succeeding in regular public schools are being sent to alternative placements. In general, students are referred to alternative schools and programs if they are at risk of education failure, as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, suspension, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with early withdrawal from school (Paglin and Fager 1997). The 2001 "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) through its Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), is the first national study of public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure to provide data on topics related to the availability of public alternative schools and programs, enrollment, staffing, and services for these students. The results presented in this report are based on questionnaire data from a nationally representative sample of 1,534 public school districts. Although there is no single commonly accepted definition of what constitutes alternative schools and programs (Lange and Sletten 2002), this survey included only public alternative schools and programs that were geared towards students at risk of education failure, that were administered by regular districts[1], and where students spent at least 50 percent of their instructional time.

[1] Regular districts are defined in the 1998–99 Common Core of Data (CCD) as one of two types: 1) A local school district that is not a component of a supervisory union, and 2) a local school district component of a supervisory union sharing a superintendent and administrative services with other local school districts.

Key Findings

Availability of and Enrollment in Public Alternative Schools and Programs for At-Risk Students

Few national-level measures are available with respect to features of availability and enrollment in public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure. The FRSS District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs asked districts for information regarding overall availability and locations of alternative schools and programs; grades at which instruction was offered; and a variety of questions related to enrollment, including overall numbers of students enrolled in alternative schools and programs as well as the existence of capacity limitations and how districts treat such problems. Results include the following:

- Overall, 39 percent of public school districts administered at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year (table 1).[2]
- Urban districts, large districts (those with 10,000 or more students), districts in the Southeast, districts with high minority student enrollments, and districts with high poverty concentrations were more likely than other districts to have alternative schools and programs for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year (table 1).
- Overall, there were 10,900 public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students in the nation during the 2000–01 school year (table 2).
- Fifty-nine percent (6,400) of all public alternative schools and programs for at-risk

[2] If elementary districts (i.e., districts with grades no higher than grade 8) are excluded from consideration, 48 percent of (unified and secondary) districts had at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year.

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students were housed in a separate facility (i.e., not within a regular school) during the 2000–01 school year (table 2). Results also indicate that districts administered few alternative schools and programs that were in juvenile detention centers (4 percent of all public alternative schools and programs), that were in community centers (3 percent), or that were charter schools (1 percent).

- Overall, districts with one or more alternative school or program for at-risk students were most likely to have just one such school or program (65 percent) (table 3). Large districts were more likely than moderate-size districts, which in turn were more likely than small districts, to have three or more alternative schools or programs (56 percent vs. 16 percent vs. 7 percent, respectively).

- Of those districts offering alternative education for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year, alternative schools and programs were offered at the secondary level (grades 9 through 12) by 88 to 92 percent of districts, at the middle school level (grades 6 through 8) by 46 to 67 percent of districts, and at the elementary school level (grades 1 through 5) by 10 to 21 percent of districts (figure 1).

- As of October 1, 2000, 612,900 students, or 1.3 percent of all public school students, were enrolled in public alternative schools or programs for at-risk students (table 2).[3] Forty-three percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students had less than 1 percent of their student population enrolled in such schools and programs (table 4).

- Overall, 12 percent of all students in alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (not shown in tables).[4] This percentage is not significantly different than the overall percentage of special education students with IEPs enrolled in all public schools during the 2000–01 school year (13 percent) (not shown in tables).[5] While 29 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs had less than 3 percent of alternative education students who were special education students with IEPs, roughly as many districts (34 percent) had 20 percent or more (table 5).

- About one-third (33 percent) of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students had at least one such school or program that did not have the capacity to enroll new students during the 1999–2000 school year (table 6). This was more likely to be the case for large and moderate-size districts than for small ones (43 and 39 percent vs. 25 percent).

- Fifty-four percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students reported that within the last 3 years there were cases where demand for enrollment exceeded capacity (not shown in tables). These districts reported employing a variety of procedures in such cases. Putting students on a waiting list was the most common procedure of districts where demand exceeded capacity (83 percent) (table 7).

Alternative Schools and Programs: Entrance and Exit Criteria

Student enrollment in the nation's public alternative schools and programs is highly fluid. Students are removed from and returned to regular schools on an individual and daily basis, for a variety of reasons. Many public alternative schools and programs aim to return at-risk students to regular schools as soon as students are prepared to do so. Some students do return to regular schools less "at risk," but many are sent back to or simply

[3] Percentages are based on total district enrollment figures according to the 2000–01 NCES CCD. In 2000–01, there were about 47 million students in the nation's public schools.

[4] An IEP is a special education program that is tailored to each student's needs according to his/her learning disability(s).

[5] Percentage derived from the 2000–01 NCES CCD.

remain in (by choice or decree) an alternative school or program for the duration of their education (Quinn and Rutherford 1998). Results of the FRSS District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs include the following findings on criteria for transferring students into and out of alternative schools and programs during the 2000–01 school year:

- Roughly half of all districts with alternative schools and programs reported that each of the following was a sufficient reason for transferring at-risk students from a regular school: possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs (52 percent); physical attacks or fights (52 percent); chronic truancy (51 percent); continual academic failure (50 percent); possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm (50 percent); disruptive verbal behavior (45 percent); and possession or use of a firearm (44 percent) (table 8).[6] Teen pregnancy/parenthood and mental health needs were least likely to be sole reasons for transfer (28 and 22 percent).[7]

- With respect to the manner in which at-risk special education students with IEPs arrive at alternative schools and programs (e.g., through the support of a director of special education, or the recommendation of regular school staff), an IEP team decision was the means most commonly employed to a "large extent" in these students' placement (66 percent) (table 9).

- While 74 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students reported a policy that allowed all alternative education students to return to a regular school, 25 percent of districts allowed some, but not all, students to return, and 1 percent allowed none to return (table 10).

- The reasons most likely to be rated as "very important" in determining whether a student was able to return to a regular school were improved attitude or behavior (82 percent) and student motivation to return (81 percent) (table 11).

Staffing, Curriculum and Services, and Collaboration

Whether students at risk of education failure are able to transfer back to regular schools or successfully graduate from alternative schools and programs may depend in part on the quality of the education and services they receive. Various factors have been identified as beneficial to at-risk students in alternative education environments, including dedicated and well-trained staff, effective curriculum, and a variety of support services provided in collaboration with an array of agencies (Quinn and Rutherford 1998). Results of the FRSS District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs include the following on such factors:

- Eighty-six percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students hired teachers specifically to teach in such schools and programs (table 12). A smaller percentage of districts transferred teachers by choice from a regular school (49 percent), and an even smaller percentage assigned teachers involuntarily to positions in alternative schools and programs (10 percent).

- Overall, many districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students had policies requiring a wide variety of services and practices for alternative education students (table 13).[8] Over three-quarters of the districts had curricula leading toward a regular high school diploma (91 percent), academic counseling (87 percent), policies requiring a

[6] The counterintuitive result that a smaller percentage of districts transferred students solely for possession of a firearm compared with other reasons may be due to the fact that districts may have policies requiring expulsion in case of firearm possession, and transfer to an alternative school or program is not an option.

[7] The finding for teen pregnancy/parenthood does not include the 27 elementary districts that were asked this question.

[8] Since some of the services were not relevant at the elementary level (e.g., career counseling, preparation for the GED exam, etc.), to ensure comparability across services, the 27 elementary districts that were asked questions about services were excluded from the findings presented in table 13.

smaller class size than in regular schools (85 percent), remedial instruction (84 percent), opportunity for self-paced instruction (83 percent), crisis/behavioral intervention (79 percent), and career counseling (79 percent). Least commonly required were extended school day or school year (29 percent), security personnel on site (26 percent), and evening or weekend classes (25 percent). On average, districts required 9.5 of the 16 services asked about in the survey (not shown in tables).

- The type of collaboration most widely reported by districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students was with the juvenile justice system (84 percent). Seventy-five percent of districts collaborated with community mental health agencies, 70 percent collaborated with police or sheriff's departments, and 69 percent collaborated with child protective services (table 14). Collaboration with parks and recreation departments was least commonly cited by districts (23 percent).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Although alternative forms of education took root in the United States in the early 19th century, their widespread adoption and proliferation did not occur until the 1960s and 1970s (Miller 1995). Alternative education has historically served diverse populations of students, including those whose family's academic, social, political, or religious values diverged from the mainstream, as well as those who were unsuccessful within the regular public school system. Raywid (1994, p. 26) notes that despite the multiplicity of forms of alternative education, two characteristics have been present from the start: "They have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and consequently they have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments."[9]

Concern among the public, educators, and policymakers about violence, weapons, and drugs on elementary and secondary school campuses, balanced with concern about sending disruptive and potentially dangerous students "out on the streets," has spawned an increased interest in alternative schools and programs (U.S. Department of Education 1996). Many students who, for one reason or another, are not succeeding in regular public schools are being sent to alternative placements. In general, students are referred to alternative schools and programs if they are at risk of education failure, as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, suspension, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with early withdrawal from school (Paglin and Fager 1997). With the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) (U.S. Public Law 103–882), districts are required to expel students for at least one year for bringing a firearm to school. However, the GFSA permits local districts to refer expelled students to alternative placements. During the 1998–99 school year, 3,523 students were expelled for bringing a firearm to school, and 44 percent were referred to an alternative placement (Gray and Sinclair 2000).

Few existing national-level measures have focused on topics related to the availability of public alternative schools and programs, enrollment, staffing, and services for students at risk of education failure. The agencies that requested this survey (Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services) were especially interested in examining why students are transferred to alternative schools and programs (for example, weapon or drug possession), and whether special education students are overrepresented in the nation's alternative schools and programs. The 2001 "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) through its Fast Response Survey System (FRSS), is the first national study of public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure in the United States to provide data on these topics. Although there is a great variety of types of alternative schools and programs (Mintz 1995), this survey included only public alternative schools and programs that were geared towards students at risk of education failure, that were administered by regular districts[10], and where students spent at least 50 percent of their instructional time.

[9] Raywid classified alternative schools and programs into 3 main types, although particular schools or programs may have features of more than one type. Type I alternatives are schools of choice and generally have high success rates. Type II alternatives are schools in which students are placed, usually as a last chance prior to expulsion. They focus on behavior modification, but involve little attention to pedagogy or curriculum. Type III alternatives focus on remediation or rehabilitation. Students are usually referred to type III alternatives. Although the difference between choice, placement, and referral is a significant one, the current study focuses on all alternatives for students at risk of education failure, and does not place emphasis on the distinction between these types.

[10] Regular districts are defined in the 1998–99 Common Core of Data (CCD) as one of two types: 1) A local school district that is not a component of a supervisory union, and 2) a local school district component of a supervisory union sharing a superintendent and administrative services with other local school districts.

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Previous Research

Little is known about the overall current state of public alternative education across the nation. Although estimates vary, data indicate that the number of alternative schools increased during the 1990s. For example, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD), in the school year 1993–94, there were 2,606 public alternative schools, compared to 3,850 public alternative schools in 1997–98 (Hoffman 2001). Note that these findings did not include alternative *programs* located within regular schools.[11] The National Alternative High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Grunbaum et al. 1999) found that in 1998–99 there were 1,390 alternative high schools serving approximately 280,000 students at risk of education failure (2 percent of all high school students).[12]

Individual states appear to be stepping up the provision of alternative education for students that are not meeting public school expectations. For instance, the state of Washington expanded its number of alternative schools from 44 in the mid-1970s to more than 180 in 1995, and Oregon law now requires that districts provide alternative education to students who are not succeeding in regular schools (Boss 1998). In 2000, a Michigan statewide study revealed that 5 percent of all high school students were enrolled in the state's 360 alternative education programs, most of which serve at-risk students (Michigan Alternative Education Study Project 2000).

Although advocates have reported the successes of many at-risk students at alternative schools and programs, "there is still very little consistent, wide-ranging evidence of their effectiveness or even an understanding of their characteristics" (Lange and Sletten 2002, p. 2). This is due, in part, to there being as yet no clearly established, widely accepted definitional framework of alternative schools and programs. In addition, national-level studies on the characteristics of alternative schools and programs and rigorous evaluation research on the links between characteristics and outcomes are in short supply (Lange and Sletten 2002).

Survey Background

The FRSS District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs was conducted in early 2001. Questionnaires were sent to a nationally representative sample of 1,609 regular districts, along with a cover letter introducing the survey and requesting that the questionnaire be completed by the person(s) most knowledgeable about the alternative schools and programs (if any) in the sampled district. Of the 1,609 districts sampled, completed surveys were received from 1,540 districts (a response rate of 97 percent). Of the 1,540 districts that completed surveys, 6 were later excluded from the sample because they were not regular districts, but rather were "regional" districts that served multiple districts and special populations of students (i.e., at-risk or special education). Regular districts included in this survey were of three types: unified, secondary, and elementary. Unified districts serve students across all grade levels and comprised 83 percent of the total sample. Secondary districts comprised 2 percent, and elementary districts comprised 15 percent of the sample.[13]

Although alternative education is provided in the United States in a multitude of forms for varied populations by a wide range of agencies, this study's scope was limited to:

- public[14] alternative schools or programs for at-risk students,

[11]Even less is known about alternative programs located in regular schools.

[12]The National Alternative High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey findings may differ from those of the 1997–98 CCD because of definitional differences – the former study included public, private, and Catholic *secondary* schools that were not programs or schools within other regular schools.

[13]Elementary districts were comprised of grade levels no higher than grade 8. They were included in the sample in order to ascertain the full range of grade levels at which public alternative education is available for at-risk students.

[14]The survey was limited to public alternative schools and programs for several reasons. First, including the private sector along with the public sector would have been beyond the scope of FRSS surveys, which have always been limited to a single education sector.

- public alternative schools or programs administered by districts, and
- public alternative schools or programs where the majority of students attend for at least half of their instructional time,

and included:

- charter schools (for at-risk students),
- alternative schools or programs (administered by districts) within juvenile detention centers,
- community-based schools or programs (administered by districts, but located within community organizations), and
- alternative schools or programs that operated during weekday evenings or weekends.

Excluded from the scope of the survey were:

- alternative schools or programs that were *not* for at-risk students (e.g., gifted and talented programs, magnet schools),
- alternative schools or programs *not* administered by districts (e.g., regional schools, private schools),
- alternative schools or programs where the majority of students attend for less than half of their instructional time,
- alternative schools or programs that exclusively serve special education students,
- vocational education programs (unless specifically designated for at-risk students),
- child care/day care centers,
- privately run sites contracted by districts, and
- short-term in-school suspension programs (lasting 2 weeks or less), detention, or in-home programs for ill or injured students.

For the purposes of the survey, "at-risk" was defined as involving the risk of education failure, as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school. *Alternative schools* were defined as being "usually housed in a separate facility where students are removed from regular schools," whereas *alternative programs* were defined as being "usually housed within regular schools." Providing districts with the list of inclusions and exclusions constituting the scope of the study meant that certain populations and forms of alternative education would not fall within the purview of the study (e.g., schools and programs for gifted and talented students, private schools, regional schools and other schools not administered by districts, and schools or programs where students spend a small portion of their school time).

Since public school districts are most knowledgeable about the schools and programs that they actually administer (whereas they might not be appropriate respondents with respect to alternative forms of education outside their own direction), limiting the scope of the survey in this way should lend greater credence to the validity of the findings. For instance, some alternative schools are administered by "regional districts." In such cases, students from more than one district typically attend the same regional alternative school, but none of the districts from which the students come actually administer the alternative school. Such districts would not be asked to report on those regional alternative schools since they might not be able to provide valid information.

The district characteristics used as analysis variables for this report are metropolitan status (urban, suburban, and rural), district enrollment size, geographic region, percent minority enrollment, and poverty concentration. These variables are defined in appendix A. It should be kept in mind that certain district characteristics may be related to each other. Also, particular district characteristics may be related to district types (unified, elementary, and secondary). Questionnaire responses were weighted to produce national estimates representing all regular public school districts in the United States. All comparative statements in this report were tested for statistical significance using t-tests adjusted for multiple comparisons using the Bonferroni

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Second, there is nothing comparable to a "district" for private schools.

adjustment and are significant at the 0.05 level. Not all significant comparisons, however, are cited. Throughout this report, differences that appear large may not be statistically significant. This is due in part to the relatively large standard errors surrounding the estimates (because of the relatively small sample size), and the use of the Bonferroni adjustment to control for multiple comparisons. Appendix A provides a detailed discussion of the sample and survey methodology.

Organization of Report

The following pages present findings related to various facets of public alternative education in the United States during the 2000–01 school year (and for several survey items, the 1999–2000 school year). Chapter 2 provides results regarding the availability of and enrollment in alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. Information is also presented on procedures followed when available capacity for enrollment is exceeded. Chapter 3 presents findings on how students arrive at and exit from alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. Chapter 4 discusses staffing, services provided for students at alternative schools and programs, and collaboration with other agencies in the provision of services. The concluding chapter highlights findings from the study and draws some general conclusions. Technical information on the study's methodology and tables of standard errors for all data presented in this report are included in appendices A and B. Appendix C presents the survey questionnaire.

2. AVAILABILITY AND ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF EDUCATION FAILURE

The 1998 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey cited 1,390 alternative high schools serving approximately 280,000 at-risk students (2 percent of all high school students) across the nation (Grunbaum et al. 1999). However, that study was limited to high school populations in alternative schools located on separate campuses, and further, included both public and private alternative schools. The current survey presents findings on all grades offered in public (and not private) alternative schools or programs that may be located in separate facilities or within regular schools.

Few national level measures are available with respect to features of enrollment in public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. The FRSS District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs asked districts a variety of questions related to availability and enrollment. Presented below are findings regarding overall availability and locations of alternative schools and programs, grades offered, and a set of findings related to enrollment, including overall numbers of students enrolled in alternative schools and programs, as well as the existence of capacity limitations and how districts treat such problems.

Availability of Public Alternative Schools and Programs for At-Risk Students

Districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. Districts were first asked whether they administered alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure during the 2000–01 school year, and if so, how many.[15] Table 1 shows the level of district-administrated alternative schools and programs, by district characteristics. Overall, 39 percent of public school districts administered at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year.[16]

The presence of alternative schools and programs for at-risk students varied by district characteristics. For example, urban districts (66 percent) were more likely than suburban (41 percent) and rural ones (35 percent) to have alternative schools and programs. Large districts (those with 10,000 or more students) were more likely than moderate-size ones (2,500 to 9,999 students), which in turn were more likely than small districts (less than 2,500 students) to have alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (95 percent vs. 69 percent vs. 26 percent).

Districts in the Southeast were more likely than those in the Northeast, Central, and Western regions to have alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (80 percent vs. 28 to 44 percent). Also, districts in the West were more likely than those in the Northeast and Central regions to have them (44 percent vs. 31 and 28 percent). With respect to minority enrollment, districts with 5 percent or less of minority students

[15] "Regional alternative schools" (i.e., those shared by more than one district) not administered by sampled districts were not included. However, a follow-up study (see appendix A) revealed that a small percentage of districts (roughly 3 percent) mistakenly included some alternative schools that they did not administer.

[16] If elementary districts are excluded (i.e., districts with grades no higher than grade 8), 48 percent of (unified and secondary) districts had at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year.

Table 1.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Percent
Total	39
Metropolitan status	
Urban	66
Suburban	41
Rural	35
District enrollment size	
Less than 2,500	26
2,500 to 9,999	69
10,000 or more	95
Region	
Northeast	31
Southeast	80
Central	28
West	44
Percent minority enrollment[1]	
5 percent or less	26
6 to 20 percent	43
21 to 50 percent	51
More than 50 percent	62
Poverty concentration[2]	
10 percent or less	31
11 to 20 percent	43
More than 20 percent	45

[1]Estimates are based on the 1,515 districts for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 1,503 districts for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

were less likely to have alternative schools and programs for at-risk students than those with 6 to 20 percent, 21 to 50 percent, and more than 50 percent minority enrollments (26 percent vs. 43 to 62 percent). As for poverty concentration, districts with a low poverty concentration (10 percent or less of students at or below the poverty level) were less likely than those with moderate (11 to 20 percent of students in poverty) and high (more than 20 percent in poverty) poverty concentrations to have alternative schools or programs for at-risk students (31 percent vs. 43 and 45 percent).[17] Table A-2 in appendix A presents the number and percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students across district characteristics.

Number and sites of alternative schools and programs for at-risk students within districts. Districts indicating that they administered alternative schools or programs for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year were then asked how many they administered. Overall, there were 10,900 public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students in the nation (table 2).[18] Many public alternative schools had sites in separate facilities (i.e., not within a regular school), sometimes specifically within juvenile detention centers or community centers. In addition, some districts operated charter schools that serve at-risk students. Districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were asked how many were: a) housed within a separate facility (i.e., not within a regular school), b) charter schools, c) in juvenile detention centers, and d) in community-based schools.[19]

[17]It should be kept in mind that some district characteristics used for independent analyses are related to each other. For example, district enrollment size and region are related, with districts in the Southeast typically being larger than those in other regions. Similarly, poverty concentration and minority enrollment are also related to district size (and to each other), since districts with high poverty concentration and high minority enrollment tend to have higher enrollments. In addition, the distribution of district types (unified, elementary, secondary) may be related to particular district characteristics. For example, among all 1,534 districts in the sample, 2 percent of districts in the Southeast were elementary ones, whereas 20 percent of districts in both the Northeast and West were elementary ones. Because of the relatively small sample used in this study, it is difficult to separate the independent effects of these variables. Their relationship, however, should be considered in the interpretation of the data presented in this report.

[18]Estimates in table 2 are based on results from the relatively small set of 848 surveyed districts that had at least one alternative school or program, weighted to national totals. Standard errors for these estimates may be found in table B-2 in appendix B.

[19]Responses to these questions were not mutually exclusive, so that, for example, charter schools might be housed in a separate facility. Also, it should be noted that the list of possible sites was not meant to be exhaustive, but reflected the specific interests of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

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Table 2 shows that 6,400 (59 percent) of the 10,900 public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were housed in separate facilities (i.e., not within a regular school) during the 2000–01 school year. Results also indicate that districts administered few alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that were in juvenile detention centers (450, or 4 percent of all public alternative schools and programs), that were in community centers (350, or 3 percent), or that were charter schools (150, or 1 percent).

Table 2.—Total number of public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, number of students enrolled, and number of specific types: Academic year 2000–01

Public alternative school and program types and enrollments	Number
Public alternative schools and programs	10,900
Students enrolled in public alternative schools and programs[1]	612,900[3]
Special education students with IEPs enrolled in public alternative schools and programs[1]	70,300[4]
Public alternative schools and programs housed in a separate facility	6,400[5]
Public alternative schools and programs in juvenile detention centers[2]	450[6]
Public alternative schools and programs that are community-based[2]	350[7]
Public alternative schools and programs that are charter schools for at-risk students[2]	150[8]

[1]Numbers reflect enrollment figures as of October 1, 2000, according to survey results.

[2]The survey asked about sites like juvenile detention centers, community centers, and charter schools due to interest by the data requesters, but this list is not exhaustive. Responses to these questions were not mutually exclusive.

[3]The number of students enrolled in public alternative schools and programs represents about 1.3 percent of the total number of students enrolled in all public schools (about 47,000,000).

[4]The number of special education students with IEPs enrolled in public alternative schools and programs represents about 12 percent of the total number of at-risk students enrolled in public alternative schools and programs.

[5]The number of public alternative schools and programs housed in separate facilities represents about 59 percent of the total number of public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students.

[6]The number of public alternative schools and programs in juvenile detention centers represents about 4 percent of the total number of public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students.

[7]The number of public alternative schools and programs that are community-based represents about 3 percent of the total number of public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students.

[8]The number of public alternative schools and programs that are charter schools for at-risk students represents about 1 percent of the total number of public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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The distribution of districts that had one, two, or three or more alternative schools or programs for at-risk students is presented in table 3. Overall, these districts were most likely to have just one such school or program (65 percent). Of those that had three or more alternative schools or programs, results varied by metropolitan status, district size, and minority enrollment.[20] Urban districts (52 percent) were more likely than suburban ones (18 percent), which were more likely than rural ones (8 percent), to have three or more schools or programs. Similarly, large districts (56 percent) were more likely than moderate-size districts (16 percent), which in turn were more likely than small districts (7 percent), to have three or more alternative schools or programs. With respect to minority enrollment, districts with more than 20 percent minority enrollment were more likely than those with 5 percent or less of minority students to have three or more (22 percent vs. 10 percent).

Table 3.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by number of schools and/or programs per district, by district characteristics: Academic year 1999–2000

Characteristic	One alternative school or program	Two alternative schools and/or programs	Three or more alternative schools and/or programs
Total	65	18	17
Metropolitan status			
Urban	33	15	52
Suburban	63	19	18
Rural	74	17	8
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	82	11	7
2,500 to 9,999	58	26	16
10,000 or more	27	17	56
Region			
Northeast	71	13	16
Southeast	71	14	15
Central	65	21	14
West	60	20	21
Percent minority enrollment[1]			
5 percent or less	75	15	10
6 to 20 percent	63	20	17
21 to 50 percent	63	16	22
More than 50 percent	58	20	22
Poverty concentration[2]			
10 percent or less	68	15	16
11 to 20 percent	59	22	20
More than 20 percent	71	15	14

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

[20]Although districts in the Southeast are relatively larger in size and are more likely to have at least one alternative school or program, these findings indicate that this region is no more likely than other regions to administer higher numbers of alternative schools and programs.

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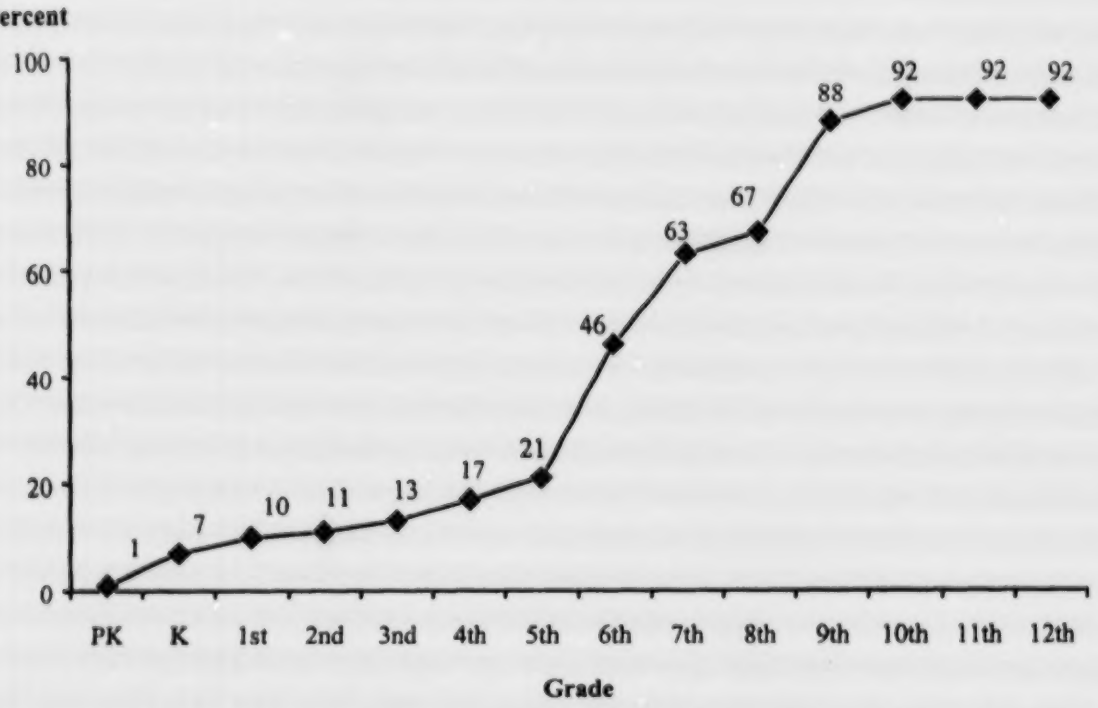
Of those districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year, alternative schools and programs were offered at the secondary level (grades 9 through 12) by 88 to 92 percent of districts, at the middle school level (grades 6 through 8) by 46 to 67 percent of districts, and at the elementary school level (grades 1 through 5) by 10 to 21 percent of districts (figure 1).

Figure 1.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that offered alternative schools and programs for prekindergarten through grade 12: Academic year 2000–01



NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Enrollment in Public Alternative Schools and Programs for At-Risk Students

Overall enrollment as of October 1, 2000. As of October 1, 2000, 612,900 students, or 1.3 percent of all public school students, were enrolled in public alternative schools or programs for students at risk of education failure (table 2).[21] Overall, 43 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students had less than 1 percent of their student population enrolled in such schools or programs (table 4). Of the 16 percent of districts with 3 percent or more of total students enrolled, there was little variation by district characteristics.[22] One exception was variation by region; districts in the West were more likely than those in the Northeast and Southeast to enroll 3 percent or more of their students in alternative schools and programs as of October 1, 2000 (23 percent vs. 8 and 5 percent). Also, districts in the Central region were more likely than those in the Southeast to do so (20 percent vs. 5 percent). These differences show that whereas districts in the Southeast were more likely than districts in other regions to have alternative schools and programs (see table 1), smaller proportions of their students were actually enrolled in them (at least compared to districts in the West and Central regions).

Enrollment of special education students. Districts were asked how many of the alternative education students who were enrolled as of October 1, 2000 were special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). An IEP is a special education program that is tailored to each student's needs according to his/her disability(s). Overall, 12 percent of all students in alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (not shown in tables). This percentage is not significantly different than the overall percentage of special education students with IEPs enrolled in all public schools during the 2000–01 school year (13 percent)[23] (not shown in tables). Furthermore, linear regression analysis reveals that there is a statistical correlation between the overall enrollment of students in alternative schools and programs for at-risk students and the overall enrollment of special education students with IEPs (i.e., districts that have higher proportions of students in alternative schools and programs also have higher proportions of special education students with IEPs in alternative schools and programs).

Table 5 shows that 29 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students reported that less than 3 percent of their alternative education students had IEPs, while 34 percent of districts had alternative education enrollments composed of 20 percent or more of the special education students with IEPs. Twenty-seven percent of districts that had students enrolled in alternative schools and programs as of October 1, 2000 reported having no special education students with IEPs (not shown in tables).

Results varied across district characteristics for districts with alternative school and program enrollments of 20 percent or more students with IEPs. For instance, small and moderate-size districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were more likely than large ones (37 and 35 percent vs. 25 percent) to have 20 percent or more special education students with IEPs within alternative schools and programs. Districts in the Southeast were more likely than those in the Central region and West (45 percent vs. 30 and 26 percent), and districts in the Northeast were more likely than those in the West (47 percent vs. 26 percent) to have 20 percent or more special education students with IEPs within alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. Districts with 5 percent or less minority populations were more likely than those with more than 50 percent minority populations to have this characteristic (44 percent vs. 25 percent).

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[21]Percentages are based on total district enrollment figures according to the 2000–01 NCES CCD. In 2000–01, there were about 47,000,000 students enrolled in public schools.

[22]Although percentage differences across subgroups appear large in some cases, these differences were not statistically significant, due to high standard errors.

[23]Percent derived from the 2000–01 NCES CCD.

Table 4.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by percent of students enrolled as of October 1, 2000, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Less than 1 percent of total district enrollment	1 to 1.99 percent of total district enrollment	2 to 2.99 percent of total district enrollment	3 percent or more of total district enrollment
Total	43	27	14	16
Metropolitan status				
Urban	36	30	17	16
Suburban	49	26	12	13
Rural	38	28	16	18
District enrollment size				
Less than 2,500	39	26	15	20
2,500 to 9,999	46	29	13	12
10,000 or more	46	25	17	12
Region				
Northeast	63	21	7	8
Southeast	60	25	10	5
Central	37	31	13	20
West	27	28	22	23
Percent minority enrollment[1]				
5 percent or less	49	26	11	14
6 to 20 percent	48	22	14	16
21 to 50 percent	38	32	18	12
More than 50 percent	34	28	16	22
Poverty concentration[2]				
10 percent or less	56	24	10	10
11 to 20 percent	40	27	17	16
More than 20 percent	38	29	15	18

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Table 5.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by percent of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in these schools and programs as of October 1, 2000, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Less than 3 percent of students have IEPs[1]	3 to 9.99 percent of students have IEPs	10 to 19.99 percent of students have IEPs	20 percent or more of students have IEPs
Total	29	16	21	34
Metropolitan status				
Urban	20	25	30	25
Suburban	32	16	18	34
Rural	28	14	21	37
District enrollment size				
Less than 2,500	36	11	16	37
2,500 to 9,999	25	16	24	35
10,000 or more	16	31	28	25
Region				
Northeast	32	9	12	47
Southeast	22	12	21	45
Central	40	10	20	30
West	24	26	25	26
Percent minority enrollment[2]				
5 percent or less	35	8	13	44
6 to 20 percent	30	16	21	33
21 to 50 percent	22	20	25	32
More than 50 percent	26	23	26	25
Poverty concentration[3]				
10 percent or less	35	14	17	34
11 to 20 percent	24	15	23	38
More than 20 percent	31	19	21	29

[1]The "less than 3 percent" category includes 27 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs that had no students with IEPs.

[2]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[3]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the reported number of special education students with IEPs within alternative schools and programs divided by the overall number of students in alternative schools and programs as of October 1, 2000. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Exceeding enrollment capacity. Districts were asked to report whether, during any month of the 1999–2000 school year, any of their alternative schools or programs for at-risk students were unable to enroll new students because of staffing or space limitations.[24] About one-third of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (33 percent) were unable to enroll new students in at least one alternative school or program during the 1999–2000 school year (table 6). This was more likely to be the case for large and moderate-size districts than for small ones (43 and 39 percent vs. 25 percent). Districts were least likely to name months at the beginning and end of the school year (August, September, and June) as months during which demand exceeded capacity (figure 2).

Table 6.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that were unable to enroll new students in an alternative school or program, by district characteristics: Academic year 1999–2000

Characteristic	Percent
Total	33
Metropolitan status	
Urban	40
Suburban	36
Rural	28
District enrollment size	
Less than 2,500	25
2,500 to 9,999	39
10,000 or more	43
Region	
Northeast	25
Southeast	32
Central	38
West	32
Percent minority enrollment[1]	
5 percent or less	33
6 to 20 percent	34
21 to 50 percent	36
More than 50 percent	25
Poverty concentration[2]	
10 percent or less	35
11 to 20 percent	37
More than 20 percent	25

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

[24]Districts were asked to report for the 1999–2000 school year because at the time of data collection, the 2000–01 school year was still in progress, and results were needed for an entire school year.

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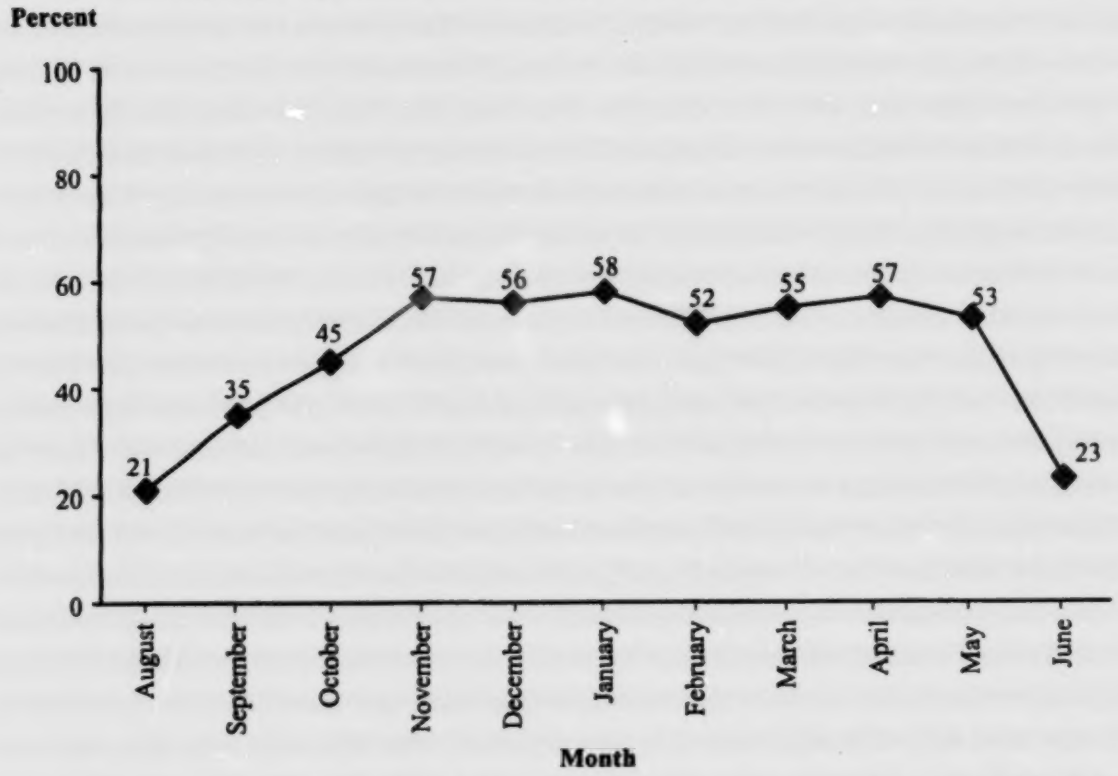
Figure 2.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students where new enrollment needs exceeded available capacity between the months of August 1999 and June 2000, by month: Academic year 1999–2000



NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Thus, it is evident that many districts were falling short with respect to available capacity and the ability to enroll new students in their alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. But what recourse do such districts have? In the survey questionnaire, all districts with alternative schools and programs were asked a series of questions regarding their procedures when, in the past 3 years, demand for enrollment exceeded capacity. Forty-six percent of districts reported that within the last 3 years there were no cases where demand for enrollment exceeded capacity (not shown in tables). The other 54 percent reported employing a variety of procedures to varying degrees (response categories not mutually exclusive). Table 7 shows that putting students on a waiting list was the most common response of districts to exceeded capacity (83 percent). Following that, 41 percent of districts responded that they increased capacity by adding staff or space, and 26 percent reported providing home-bound instruction. Smaller percentages of districts reported referring students to another district (14 percent), opening a new site (10 percent), and referring students to a private facility (9 percent).

Table 7.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that employed various procedures when demand for enrollment exceeded available capacity within the last 3 years, by district characteristics: Academic years 1998–99 to 2000–01

Characteristic	Waiting list	Add staff or space	Provide home-bound instruction	Refer students to another district	Open new site	Refer students to private facility
Total	83	41	26	14	10	9
Metropolitan status						
Urban	81	59	36	5	23	11
Suburban	83	43	28	17	9	10
Rural	83	33	22	13	7	8
District enrollment size						
Less than 2,500	84	30	24	17	7	8
2,500 to 9,999	83	42	23	14	6	12
10,000 or more	81	62	40	7	24	8
Region						
Northeast	75	42	33	6	11	16
Southeast	81	42	30	5	7	5
Central	88	29	22	20	10	7
West	83	50	25	17	12	12
Percent minority enrollment[1]						
5 percent or less	92	31	29	14	8	9
6 to 20 percent	77	42	24	17	10	12
21 to 50 percent	85	48	24	13	9	8
More than 50 percent	75	49	30	9	16	7
Poverty concentration[2]						
10 percent or less	84	39	31	12	11	7
11 to 20 percent	86	40	23	18	9	13
More than 20 percent	77	43	28	11	10	6

[1]Estimates are based on the 502 districts with alternative schools and programs where demand for enrollment exceeded capacity within the last three years, for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 505 districts with alternative schools and programs where demand for enrollment exceeded capacity within the last three years, for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 21 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year and where demand for enrollment exceeded capacity within the last three years. Procedures were not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Districts with 6 to 20 percent minority enrollment or more than 50 percent minority enrollment were less likely to put students on a waiting list than districts with 5 percent or less minority students (77 and 75 percent vs. 92 percent). Urban districts were more likely than suburban and rural districts to increase capacity by adding staff or space (59 percent vs. 43 and 33 percent). Similarly, large districts were more likely than moderate-size districts, which were in turn more likely than small districts to add staff or space (62 percent vs. 42 percent vs. 30 percent). Also, districts in the West were more likely to add staff or space than districts in the Central region (50 percent vs. 29 percent).

Large districts were more likely than small and moderate-size districts to provide home-bound instruction for at-risk students when demand for alternative schools and programs exceeded capacity during the 3 years prior to the survey (40 percent vs. 24 and 23 percent). Similarly, large districts were more likely than both small and moderate-size districts to open a new site (24 percent vs. 7 and 6 percent), and urban districts were more likely than suburban and rural ones to do so (23 percent vs. 9 and 7 percent). Suburban districts were more likely than urban ones (17 percent vs. 5 percent), and districts in the Central region were more likely than those in the Northeast and the Southeast (20 percent vs. 6 and 5 percent) to refer students to another district when demand exceeded capacity.

3. ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF EDUCATION FAILURE: ENTRANCE AND EXIT CRITERIA

Student enrollment in the nation's public alternative schools and programs is highly fluid. Students are removed from regular schools on an individual and daily basis, for a variety of reasons. Some are removed for disruptive behavior, such as possession of weapons, fighting, disruptive verbal behavior, criminal activity, or the use or distribution of alcohol or drugs (Paglin and Fager 1997). Others are removed for other reasons that put them at risk of education failure, such as chronic truancy, continual academic failure, teen pregnancy/parenthood, or mental health problems.

Similarly, students are returned to regular schools largely on an individual basis, for a variety of reasons. Many public alternative schools and programs aim to return at-risk students to regular schools as soon as they are prepared to do so. Some students do return to regular schools less "at risk," but many are sent back to or simply remain in (by choice or decree) an alternative school or program for the duration of their education (Quinn and Rutherford 1998). This chapter addresses questions relating to how students arrive at and exit from the nation's public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students.

Entrance Criteria

Reasons for transfer. The survey questionnaire asked districts whether at-risk students could be transferred to alternative schools and programs solely on the basis of various reasons, including types of disruptive behavior and for other reasons that put students at risk. Roughly half of all districts with alternative schools and programs reported that each of the following was sufficient reason for transferring students from a regular school: possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs (52 percent); physical attacks or fights (52 percent); chronic truancy (51 percent); possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm (50 percent); continual academic failure (50 percent); disruptive verbal behavior (45 percent); and possession or use of a firearm (44 percent) (table 8).[25] Teen pregnancy/parenthood and mental health needs were least likely to be sole reasons for transfer (28 and 22 percent). Thirty-eight percent of districts reported arrest or involvement with the juvenile justice system as a sufficient reason for transfer to an alternative school.

Overall, 20 percent of districts indicated that none of these reasons were sufficient in themselves to transfer students to alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (not shown in tables). What is more, the reasons for transfer may be mitigated by the fact that in more serious cases, such as weapon possession or violence, districts may have policies that require suspension or expulsion, and transfer to an alternative school or program is not an option available to suspended or expelled students. Districts reported a mean of 4.3 sole reasons (out of 10 possible) for transfer to alternative schools and programs (not shown in tables).

[25]The counterintuitive result that a smaller percentage of districts transferred students solely for possession or use of a firearm compared with other reasons may be due to the fact that districts may have policies requiring expulsion in case of firearm possession, and transfer to an alternative school or program is not an option.

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Table 8.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported that students could be transferred to an alternative school or program solely on the basis of various reasons, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs	Physical attacks or fights	Chronic truancy	Possession or use of a weapon (other than a firearm)	Continual academic failure
Total	52	52	51	50	50
Metropolitan status					
Urban	60	65	54	61	52
Suburban	54	48	47	52	46
Rural	49	52	54	46	54
District enrollment size					
Less than 2,500	42	46	53	41	52
2,500 to 9,999	56	51	47	54	48
10,000 or more	76	72	53	72	51
Region					
Northeast	41	40	40	42	44
Southeast	70	71	50	65	43
Central	39	42	56	35	60
West	56	52	53	55	50
Percent minority enrollment[1]					
5 percent or less	45	45	52	44	58
6 to 20 percent	46	46	47	43	45
21 to 50 percent	59	56	51	57	49
More than 50 percent	65	63	54	62	46
Poverty concentration[2]					
10 percent or less	44	40	46	41	49
11 to 20 percent	47	49	51	45	51
More than 20 percent	65	62	54	62	51

NOTE: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 8.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported that students could be transferred to an alternative school or program solely on the basis of various reasons, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01—Continued

Characteristic	Disruptive verbal behavior	Possession or use of a firearm	Arrest or involvement with juvenile justice system	Teen pregnancy/ parenthood[3]	Mental health needs
Total	45	44	38	28	22
Metropolitan status					
Urban	48	49	47	38	27
Suburban	41	45	36	24	17
Rural	48	42	38	30	26
District enrollment size					
Less than 2,500	45	37	35	31	23
2,500 to 9,999	43	46	38	23	21
10,000 or more	54	61	50	34	21
Region					
Northeast	33	38	24	10	16
Southeast	62	54	46	15	20
Central	39	31	33	40	28
West	45	50	44	35	22
Percent minority enrollment[1]					
5 percent or less	41	40	31	30	26
6 to 20 percent	41	39	36	28	22
21 to 50 percent	47	50	39	26	19
More than 50 percent	56	49	49	26	20
Poverty concentration[2]					
10 percent or less	36	34	28	27	18
11 to 20 percent	43	42	38	31	27
More than 20 percent	54	52	46	25	20

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

[3]Does not include results for the 27 elementary districts that were asked about teen pregnancy/parenthood.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Response categories were not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Many differences across district characteristics were revealed with respect to sole reasons for transfer to alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure, especially for the five reasons involving disruptive behavior:

- possession or use of a firearm,
- possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm,
- possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco),
- physical attacks or fights, and
- disruptive verbal behavior.

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First, large districts were more likely than small and moderate-size districts to transfer students solely on the basis of each of the five kinds of disruptive behavior.[26] In general, districts in the Southeast region were more likely than those in the Northeast, Central, and Western regions to do so. For example, districts in the Southeast were more likely than districts in the Central region to transfer students solely on the basis of possession or use of a firearm (54 percent vs. 31 percent) and were more likely than districts in the Northeast and Central regions to transfer for possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm (65 percent vs. 42 and 35 percent) (table 8). Further, districts in the Southeast were more likely than those in the Northeast, Central, and Western regions to transfer solely for alcohol or drugs (70 percent vs. 41, 39, and 56 percent, respectively), for physical attacks or fights (71 percent vs. 40, 42, and 52 percent, respectively), and for disruptive verbal behavior (62 percent vs. 33, 39, and 45 percent, respectively).

Districts with 50 percent or more minority student populations were generally more likely than those with 5 percent or less and 6 to 20 percent minority enrollments to transfer students solely for disruptive behaviors, as in possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm (62 percent vs. 44 and 43 percent), alcohol or drugs (65 percent vs. 45 and 46 percent), physical attacks or fights (63 percent vs. 45 and 46 percent), and disruptive verbal behavior (56 percent vs. 41 and 41 percent). Finally, districts with high poverty concentrations were more likely than those with low and moderate concentrations to transfer solely for possession or use of a weapon other than a firearm (62 percent vs. 41 and 45 percent), alcohol or drugs (65 percent vs. 44 and 47 percent), physical attacks or fights (62 percent vs. 40 and 49 percent), and disruptive verbal behavior (54 percent vs. 36 and 43 percent).

There were few differences across district characteristics with respect to sole reasons for transfer that are less disruptive to other students, such as chronic truancy, continual academic failure, teen pregnancy/parenthood, and mental health needs. One exception was that transfer to alternative schools and programs solely because of teen pregnancy/parenthood differed by region; districts in the Northeast and Southeast were less likely than those in the Central region and the West to do so (10 and 15 percent vs. 40 and 35 percent, respectively).

Placement of special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Data from the survey help to shed some light on the issue of how at-risk special education students with IEPs may arrive at alternative schools and programs. Districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were asked the extent to which special education students with IEPs were placed in alternative schools and programs through each of a variety of means (thus, response categories were not mutually exclusive). An IEP team decision was most commonly employed to a "large extent" in placing special education students with IEPs in alternative schools and programs (66 percent) (table 9). Eighteen percent of districts did so to a "moderate extent." Following an IEP team decision, districts were more likely to rely on support of a director of special education (37 percent) and a regular school staff recommendation (31 percent) to a large extent, compared to other means (12 to 15 percent) when placing special education students in alternative schools and programs.[27]

[26] An exception to this was that large districts were not more likely than small districts to transfer students solely on the basis of disruptive verbal behavior.

[27] Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a systematic process for describing problem behavior, identifying environmental factors and events that predict problem behavior, and guiding the development of behavior support plans.

Table 9.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported the extent to which various means influence the placement of special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in alternative schools and programs: Academic year 2000–01

Means of placement	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
IEP team decision	6	10	18	66
Support of director of special education	19	21	23	37
Regular school staff recommendation	16	19	33	31
Student request	29	33	23	15
Parent request	21	31	33	15
As a result of a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)*	36	25	26	14
Referral by juvenile justice system	33	31	24	12

*Functional Behavioral Assessment is a systematic process for describing problem behavior, identifying environmental factors and events that predict problem behavior, and guiding the development of behavior support plans.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 32 percent of districts that reported having alternative schools or programs and at least some special education students with IEPs in these alternative schools and programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Exit Criteria

Although many public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students aim to return students to regular schools as soon as they are prepared for it, not all districts allow all alternative education students to do so. Districts were asked whether it was their policy to allow all, some, or no students enrolled in alternative schools and programs for at-risk students to return to regular schools. Table 10 shows that while 74 percent of districts reported a policy that allowed all alternative education students to return to a regular school, 25 percent of districts allowed some, but not all students to return, and 1 percent allowed none to return. These findings were consistent across district characteristics, with the exception of differences by minority student population; districts with more than 50 percent minority enrollment were more likely than those with 21 to 50 percent minority enrollment to allow all alternative education students to return to a regular school (81 percent vs. 68 percent).

Although most alternative education students attending alternative schools and programs for at-risk students are allowed to return to regular schools, some schools are reluctant to bring students back into the regular classroom (Harrington-Lueker 1995). Moreover, even if provided the opportunity, some students elect to remain in alternative schools and programs, and some are never adequately prepared to return to a regular school (Quinn and Rutherford 1998). Whether a student returns to a regular public school depends on a variety of factors, including district policies regarding criteria for return. District respondents were asked to rate the importance of a variety of reasons in determining whether a student is able to return to a regular school, including those involving student behavior, performance, and attitude, as well as the approval of regular school and/or alternative school or program staff.

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Table 10.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported a policy that allows all, some, or no students enrolled to return to a regular school, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Yes, for all students	Yes, for some students	No, never for any students
Total	74	25	1
Metropolitan status			
Urban	76	24	0
Suburban	71	28	(#)
Rural	75	23	2
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	73	25	2
2,500 to 9,999	76	24	(#)
10,000 or more	71	29	0
Region			
Northeast	75	25	0
Southeast	75	25	0
Central	69	29	2
West	76	23	2
Percent minority enrollment[1]			
5 percent or less	72	26	1
6 to 20 percent	74	26	0
21 to 50 percent	68	31	1
More than 50 percent	81	17	1
Poverty concentration[2]			
10 percent or less	75	24	1
11 to 20 percent	70	29	1
More than 20 percent	77	23	1

Estimate less than 0.5 percent.

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

The reasons most likely to be rated as "very important" in determining whether a student was able to return to a regular school were improved attitude or behavior (82 percent) and student motivation to return (81 percent) (table 11). Following that, approval of alternative school or program staff was next most commonly cited as "very important" (67 percent), followed by improved grades (52 percent), then approval of the regular school administrator or counselor (40 percent). Least commonly cited as a "very important" reason was student readiness as measured by a standardized assessment (12 percent), followed by availability of space in regular schools (3 percent).

Some variation existed by enrollment size. Small districts were more likely than large ones to view student motivation to return as very important (85 percent vs. 75 percent). Small districts were also more likely than moderate-size ones, which were in turn more likely than large districts to regard approval of the regular school administrator or counselor as a very important reason in

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determining whether a student is able to return to a regular school (48 percent vs. 35 vs. 25 percent). By region, districts in the Southeast were more likely than those in the West to view improved attitude and behavior as very important (89 percent vs. 75 percent). Districts in the Southeast were less likely than those in the Central region to regard student motivation to return as very important (73 percent vs. 88 percent) and were more likely than districts in the Northeast and West to rate the approval of alternative school or program staff as very important reasons (78 percent vs. 57 and 63 percent). Districts with a high poverty concentration were more likely than districts with a low poverty concentration to rate approval of the regular school administrator or counselor as a very important reason for returning students to regular schools (43 percent vs. 31 percent).

Table 11.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that cited various reasons as "very important" in determining whether an enrolled student can return to a regular school, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Improved attitude or behavior	Student motivation to return	Approval of alternative school/program staff	Improved grades	Approval of the regular school administrator or counselor	Student readiness by standardized assessment	Availability of space in regular school
Total	82	81	67	52	40	12	3
Metropolitan status							
Urban	85	83	61	54	29	13	3
Suburban	81	78	62	54	37	8	4
Rural	82	84	73	50	44	15	3
District enrollment size							
Less than 2,500	80	85	69	54	48	15	3
2,500 to 9,999	84	78	67	50	35	8	3
10,000 or more	82	75	60	53	25	12	3
Region							
Northeast	85	82	57	49	38	6	3
Southeast	89	73	78	47	36	15	1
Central	83	88	69	57	45	9	3
West	75	81	63	54	40	15	5
Percent minority enrollment[1]							
5 percent or less	83	87	67	52	44	15	4
6 to 20 percent	80	84	67	48	43	8	3
21 to 50 percent	82	73	66	48	32	14	4
More than 50 percent	82	77	68	64	38	10	3
Poverty concentration[2]							
10 percent or less	83	78	62	50	31	9	6
11 to 20 percent	80	84	65	51	42	9	2
More than 20 percent	83	80	73	56	43	18	3

[1]Estimates are based on the 834 districts with alternative schools and programs that allowed all or some students to return to a regular school, for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 837 districts with alternative schools and programs that allowed all or some students to return to a regular school, for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year and allowed all or some students to return to a regular school. Response categories were not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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4. STAFFING, CURRICULUM AND SERVICES, AND COLLABORATION

Whether at-risk students are able to transfer back to regular schools or successfully graduate from alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure may depend in part on the quality of the education and services they receive at their alternative schools and programs. Various factors have been identified as beneficial to at-risk students in alternative education environments, including dedicated and well-trained staff, effective curriculum, and a variety of support services provided in collaboration with an array of agencies (Quinn and Rutherford 1998). The final section of the survey questionnaire asked questions pertaining to staffing, curriculum and services, and collaboration of alternative schools and programs with outside agencies.

Staffing

Teachers play an integral role in the nation's alternative schools and programs. Research suggests that better outcomes are obtained when teachers are well-trained, caring, demanding, highly motivated, and responsive to the special needs of at-risk students (Barr and Parrett 2001). In addition, it has been found that teachers who are involuntarily assigned are less likely to serve students well than those who choose to teach in alternative schools and programs (Barr and Parrett 2001). At the time of this survey, there were no national data on how teachers come to teach at public alternative schools and programs. Some teachers may be hired specifically for a position in alternative education, while others may have experience in regular schools and are then willingly transferred. Still others may be required by their districts to transfer involuntarily to alternative schools and programs. Districts were asked whether their alternative school and program teachers were hired specifically to teach in alternative schools and programs, transferred by choice from a regular school, and/or were involuntarily assigned to teach in an alternative school or program (these response choices were not mutually exclusive).

Results indicate that 86 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students hired teachers specifically to teach in such schools and programs (table 12). A smaller percentage of districts transferred teachers by choice from a regular school (49 percent), and an even smaller percentage assigned teachers involuntarily to positions in alternative schools and programs (10 percent). There was considerable variation across district characteristics. For instance, large and moderate-size districts were more likely than small districts both to hire teachers specifically to teach at an alternative school or program and to transfer teachers voluntarily from regular schools (93 and 89 percent vs. 81 percent, and 83 and 60 percent vs. 31 percent). In addition, large districts were more likely than small ones to assign teachers involuntarily to alternative schools and programs for at-risk students (17 percent vs. 8 percent). By region, districts in the West were more likely than those in the Southeast to hire teachers specifically to teach at an alternative school or program for at-risk students (90 percent vs. 81 percent). Districts in the Southeast and West were more likely than those in the Northeast and Central regions to transfer teachers by choice (61 and 56 percent vs. 33 and 40 percent) and also to assign them involuntarily (16 and 14 percent vs. 3 and 5 percent).

Districts with 50 percent or more minority enrollment were more likely than those with 5 percent or less and 6 to 20 percent minority enrollments to transfer teachers by choice (62 percent vs. 37 and 46 percent) and to assign them involuntarily to alternative schools and programs (20 percent vs. 5 and 8 percent). Districts with a low poverty concentration were

more likely than those with a high poverty concentration to hire teachers specifically to teach in alternative schools and programs (91 percent vs. 80 percent), but were less likely than districts with moderate and high poverty concentrations to assign teachers involuntarily (3 percent vs. 10 and 15 percent).

Table 12.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that used various practices for hiring alternative school and program teachers, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Hired specifically to teach in alternative schools and programs	Transferred by choice from a regular school	Involuntarily assigned
Total	86	49	10
Metropolitan status			
Urban	93	81	17
Suburban	88	46	9
Rural	83	46	10
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	81	31	8
2,500 to 9,999	89	60	11
10,000 or more	93	83	17
Region			
Northeast	85	33	3
Southeast	81	61	16
Central	85	40	5
West	90	56	14
Percent minority enrollment[1]			
5 percent or less	87	37	5
6 to 20 percent	92	46	8
21 to 50 percent	86	56	11
More than 50 percent	77	62	20
Poverty concentration[2]			
10 percent or less	91	43	3
11 to 20 percent	87	49	10
More than 20 percent	80	54	15

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Response categories were not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Curriculum and Services

Findings from the survey show that many districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students have policies that require a wide variety of services and practices for alternative education students (table 13).[28] For example, over three-quarters of the districts had policies requiring curricula leading toward a regular high school diploma (91 percent), academic counseling (87 percent), a smaller class size than in regular schools (85 percent), remedial instruction (84 percent), opportunity for self-paced instruction (83 percent), crisis/behavioral intervention (79 percent), and career counseling (79 percent). Least commonly required were extended school day or school year (29 percent), security personnel on site (26 percent), and evening or weekend classes (25 percent).

Table 13.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported various required services or practices be made routinely available to enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Curricula for regular high school diploma	Academic counseling	Smaller class size	Remedial instruction	Opportunity for self-paced instruction	Crisis or behavioral intervention	Career counseling	Psycho-logical counseling
Total	91	87	85	84	83	79	79	58
Metropolitan status								
Urban	98	93	93	90	87	88	84	70
Suburban	92	87	87	83	80	78	77	57
Rural	89	86	82	83	84	78	80	58
District enrollment size								
Less than 2,500	89	87	81	82	82	75	79	57
2,500 to 9,999	92	86	86	84	82	81	77	58
10,000 or more	96	89	95	89	85	85	84	66
Region								
Northeast	95	91	93	81	74	84	80	71
Southeast	90	87	92	84	81	80	80	61
Central	89	85	80	82	80	74	79	46
West	92	87	81	86	90	80	79	62
Percent minority enrollment[1]								
5 percent or less	91	89	83	83	78	78	81	60
6 to 20 percent	91	85	85	81	80	78	75	50
21 to 50 percent	94	88	88	85	87	80	77	63
More than 50 percent	88	86	84	86	88	81	83	61
Poverty concentration[2]								
10 percent or less	92	86	84	79	74	75	75	55
11 to 20 percent	91	87	88	87	84	80	79	57
More than 20 percent	91	87	82	82	87	81	83	61

NOTE: See footnotes at end of table.

[28]Since some of the services were not relevant at the elementary level (e.g., career counseling, preparation for the GED exam, etc.), to ensure comparability across services, the 27 elementary districts that were asked questions about services were excluded from the findings presented in table 13. Response categories were not mutually exclusive.

Table 13.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported various required services or practices be made routinely available to enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01—Continued

Characteristic	Social work services	Vocational or skills training	Opportunity to take classes elsewhere	Preparation for the GED exam	Peer mediation	Extended school day/year	Security personnel on site	Evening or weekend classes
Total	55	48	44	41	37	29	26	25
Metropolitan status								
Urban	69	58	59	48	50	39	54	34
Suburban	53	46	44	36	37	25	30	22
Rural	54	48	42	43	36	30	18	27
District enrollment size								
Less than 2,500	50	45	42	39	34	25	15	24
2,500 to 9,999	57	47	43	40	36	29	29	24
10,000 or more	65	61	55	48	52	39	59	35
Region								
Northeast	52	47	34	23	30	25	29	23
Southeast	61	46	24	48	41	21	33	14
Central	56	51	53	37	39	32	19	30
West	51	47	56	46	38	33	27	30
Percent minority enrollment[1]								
5 percent or less	51	50	45	35	36	26	16	27
6 to 20 percent	47	48	41	41	35	25	18	26
21 to 50 percent	58	52	48	44	38	27	33	25
More than 50 percent	66	40	43	44	41	36	44	24
Poverty concentration[2]								
10 percent or less	48	46	48	33	30	28	20	25
11 to 20 percent	53	52	46	43	41	31	27	29
More than 20 percent	61	45	40	43	38	25	30	23

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the unified and secondary districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Since some of the services were not relevant at the elementary level (e.g., career counseling, preparation for the GED exam, etc.), to ensure comparability across services, the 27 elementary districts that were asked questions about services were excluded from the findings presented in this table. Response categories were not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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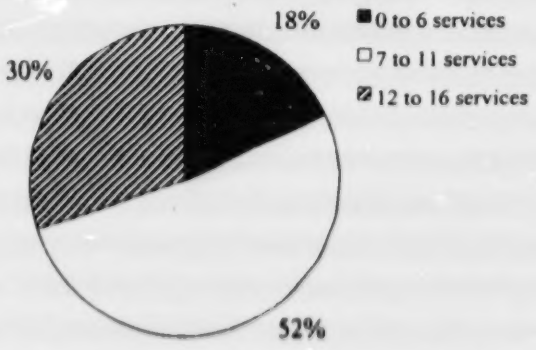
On average, districts required 9.5 of the 16 services asked about in the survey (not shown in tables). About one-fifth (18 percent) of districts required 0 to 6 of the 16 specified services, 52 percent required 7 to 11, and 30 percent required 12 to 16 of the services (figure 3).

Figure 3.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by the number of various services or practices made routinely available to enrolled students: Academic year 2000–01



NOTE: Percentages are based on the unified and secondary districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Since some of the services were not relevant at the elementary level (e.g., career counseling, preparation for the GED exam, etc.), to ensure comparability across services, the 27 elementary districts that were asked questions about services were excluded from the findings presented in this figure.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Large districts were more likely than small ones to require 10 of the 16 services listed in the survey (smaller class size, crisis/behavioral intervention, social work services, peer mediation, extended school day/year, evening weekend classes, curricula leading towards regular diploma, vocational or skills training, opportunity to take classes elsewhere, and security personnel on site). Districts with more than 50 percent minority enrollment were more likely than those with 6 to 20 percent minority enrollment to require social work services (66 percent vs. 47 percent). Districts with more than 50 percent and 21 to 50 percent minority enrollments were more likely than districts with 5 percent or less and 6 to 20 percent minority enrollments to require security personnel on site (44 and 33 percent vs. 16 and 18 percent). Districts with a high poverty concentration were more likely than those with a low concentration to require security personnel on site (30 percent vs. 20 percent).

Collaboration with Other Agencies

Alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure often collaborate with agencies, centers, or departments outside of the public school system. These partnerships make available to students an array of social and psychological support services that might not otherwise be available. The survey asked districts with alternative schools and programs if they collaborated with 12 types of agencies, such as mental health organizations, job placement centers, crisis intervention centers, and drug and/or alcohol clinics.

The most widely reported type of collaboration was with the juvenile justice system (84 percent) (table 14). Seventy-five percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students reported collaboration with community mental health agencies, 70 percent collaborated with police or sheriff's departments, and 69 percent collaborated with child protective services. Of the services asked about, collaboration with parks and recreation departments was least commonly cited by districts (23 percent).

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Table 14.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that collaborated with various agencies in order to provide services for enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Juvenile justice system	Community mental health agency	Police or sheriff's department	Child protective services	Health and human services agency or hospital	Drug and/or alcohol clinic
Total	84	75	70	69	65	59
Metropolitan status						
Urban	88	82	72	78	76	73
Suburban	81	73	71	61	56	59
Rural	86	76	69	73	70	56
District enrollment size						
Less than 2,500	82	70	67	64	64	55
2,500 to 9,999	83	77	71	71	63	59
10,000 or more	92	88	79	77	72	74
Region						
Northeast	67	68	47	57	52	53
Southeast	88	82	79	78	67	55
Central	84	70	65	67	70	66
West	89	77	79	69	65	60
Percent minority enrollment[1]						
5 percent or less	81	69	60	67	64	58
6 to 20 percent	82	77	71	68	62	57
21 to 50 percent	87	81	75	76	67	58
More than 50 percent	87	74	76	64	65	63
Poverty concentration[2]						
10 percent or less	77	65	58	59	55	58
11 to 20 percent	85	78	73	74	68	59
More than 20 percent	87	78	74	68	67	59

NOTE: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 14.—Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that collaborated with various agencies in order to provide services for enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01—Continued

Characteristic	Community organization	Family organizations or associations	Crisis intervention center	Family planning/child care/child placement agency	Job placement center[3]	Parks and recreation department
Total	58	52	47	46	40	23
Metropolitan status						
Urban	76	73	58	63	54	42
Suburban	56	53	46	39	35	21
Rural	55	47	45	48	42	20
District enrollment size						
Less than 2,500	49	44	43	43	38	18
2,500 to 9,999	62	55	46	44	39	25
10,000 or more	75	72	62	59	51	33
Region						
Northeast	47	46	43	33	40	17
Southeast	57	50	42	37	34	22
Central	56	51	46	50	40	21
West	64	56	53	53	44	27
Percent minority enrollment[1]						
5 percent or less	51	45	42	43	40	18
6 to 20 percent	53	50	49	39	36	21
21 to 50 percent	66	58	50	49	43	27
More than 50 percent	64	56	48	52	40	28
Poverty concentration[2]						
10 percent or less	52	47	44	33	34	19
11 to 20 percent	60	55	49	52	46	26
More than 20 percent	59	52	47	47	37	21

[1]Estimates are based on the 840 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 843 districts with alternative schools and programs for which data on poverty concentration were available. Poverty concentration is based on Census Bureau data on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97.

[3]Does not include results for the 28 elementary districts that answered the question about a job placement center.

NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year. Response categories were not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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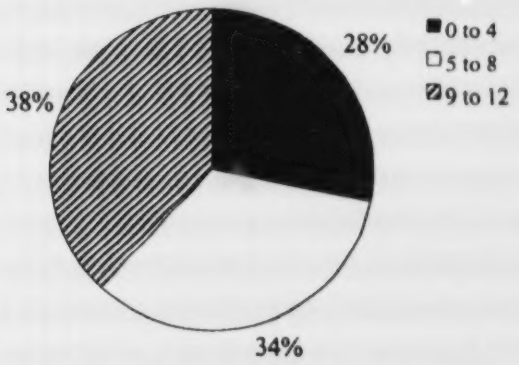
On average, districts collaborated with 6.9 of the 12 different agencies listed (not shown in tables). Figure 4 shows the distribution of districts that reported collaboration with 0 to 4, 5 to 8, and 9 to 12 agencies. Twenty-eight percent of districts collaborated with 0 to 4 agencies, 34 percent of districts collaborated with 5 to 8 agencies, and the remainder (38 percent) collaborated with 9 to 12 agencies in providing services to alternative education students.

Figure 4.—Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by the number of various agencies the district reported collaborating with to provide services to enrolled students: Academic year 2000–01



NOTE: Percentages are based on the 39 percent of districts that reported administrating at least one alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

The results viewed across district characteristics reveal several noteworthy patterns. For instance, urban districts tended to have a higher percentage of collaboration with agencies than suburban and rural districts for 5 of the 12 types of collaboration: community organizations (76 percent vs. 56 and 55 percent), drug and/or alcohol clinics (73 percent vs. 59 and 56 percent), family organizations or associations (73 percent vs. 53 and 47 percent), family planning/child care/child placement agencies (63 percent vs. 39 and 48 percent), and parks and recreations departments (42 percent vs. 21 and 20 percent). Additional differences were found between urban and suburban districts; urban districts were more likely than suburban ones to collaborate with child protective services (78 percent vs. 61 percent), job placement centers[29] (54 percent vs. 35 percent), and health and human services agencies or hospitals (76 percent vs. 56 percent).

Differences were also evident by district enrollment size. For example, of the 12 agencies that districts with alternative schools and programs were asked about, large districts were more likely than small and moderate-size ones to collaborate with 8 of them, including community mental health agencies (88 percent vs. 70 and 77 percent), community organizations (75 percent vs. 49 and 62 percent), crisis intervention centers (62 percent vs. 43 and 46 percent), drug and/or alcohol clinics (74 percent vs. 55 and 59 percent), family organizations or associations (72 percent vs. 44 and 55 percent), family planning/child care/child placement agencies (59 percent vs. 43 and 44 percent), the juvenile justice system (92 percent vs. 82 and 83 percent), and police or sheriff's departments (79 percent vs. 67 and 71 percent).

Collaboration between districts and police or sheriff's departments was higher in districts with 21 to 50 percent and more than 50 percent minority enrollments than in districts with 5 percent or less of minority students (75 and 76 percent vs. 60 percent). Similarly, districts with moderate and high poverty concentrations collaborated with a police or sheriff's department more frequently than districts with a low poverty concentration (73 and 74 percent vs. 58 percent).

[29] Does not include results for the 28 elementary districts that were asked about a job placement center.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Few existing national-level measures have focused on public alternative education for students at risk of education failure. This report presented findings about a broad range of issues regarding public alternative education, including the availability of public alternative schools and programs, enrollment, entrance and exit procedures, staffing, and services. Although the original respondent sample contained 1,534 districts, most of the data presented in this report are based on questionnaire data for the 848 districts that reported having alternative schools and programs for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year. The questionnaire responses were weighted to produce national estimates that represent all regular public school districts in the United States. This chapter provides a summary of findings as well as overall conclusions.

Availability and Enrollment

Overall, 39 percent of districts had alternative schools or programs for at-risk students that enrolled a total of 612,900 students during the 2000–01 school year. It should be kept in mind, however, that this does not mean that no at-risk students from the remaining 61 percent of districts attended an alternative school or program during this period. Some students might have attended alternative schools or programs that fell outside of the scope of this study (e.g., private alternative schools or regional alternative schools).

Despite the fact that the majority of districts in the nation did not have any alternative schools or programs, it should not be concluded necessarily that these districts were inadequately serving their at-risk students. Many of the districts without any alternative schools or programs were those with small enrollment sizes in rural areas, and thus may not have had sufficient need for alternative education. In addition, 22 percent of the districts in the total sample were elementary districts, which presumably have less need for alternative education for students at risk of education failure. Further, some smaller districts may have contracted with private alternative schools, which would not have been included in the survey results.

Findings across survey questions revealed considerable variation by district characteristics, such as metropolitan status, enrollment size, region, percent of minority students, and poverty concentration. For instance, with respect to the presence of alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, large districts (ones with 10,000 or more students) were more likely than smaller districts to have alternative schools and programs. This finding is not surprising, however, since larger districts typically serve greater numbers of at-risk students and generally have more resources at their disposal to address the needs of these students.

Districts in the Southeast, districts with high minority enrollments, and districts with high poverty concentrations were more likely than their counterpart districts to have alternative schools and programs for at-risk students. This pattern was repeated across findings for many of the questions in the survey. It should be kept in mind, however, that this may be related to the fact that districts in the Southeast, districts with high percentages of minority students, and districts with high poverty levels tended to have higher enrollment levels (not shown in tables).

Of the 39 percent of districts that had alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, 65 percent had only 1 alternative school or program during the 2000–01 school year, and 18 percent had 2 schools and/or programs. This may indicate that some districts (i.e., most probably smaller ones) were able to address the needs of their at-risk students with only one or two alternative schools and programs. On the other hand, it might indicate that districts are reluctant to expand their offerings of alternative education: Raywid (1994)

asserts that "...alternatives have continued to lack 'institutional legitimacy.' Even districts that are pleased to have one or two alternatives remain cool to the prospect of multiplying them or converting the district entirely" (p. 30).

The present study revealed that alternative schools and programs for at-risk students were not limited to secondary grade levels. Some districts were administering alternative schools and programs at the middle school level, and some even at the elementary level. These findings are in accord with the prediction of Paglin and Fager (1997): "It appears there will be a growing number of alternative middle schools and perhaps even elementary schools."

Altogether, 1.3 percent of all public school students attended public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students during the 2000–01 school year.[30] Of the students who attended public alternative schools and programs, 12 percent were special education students with IEPs. According to the 2000–01 CCD, roughly the same proportion of special education students with IEPs existed within the entire population of public school students (13 percent).

Not all at-risk students in need of alternative education were able to be placed in alternative schools and programs during the 1999–2000 school year; 33 percent of districts with alternative schools and programs reported that at least one of their schools or programs was unable to enroll new students because of staffing or space limitations. In cases where demand for enrollment exceeded available capacity, most of these districts (83 percent) reported putting students on a waiting list.

Entrance and Exit Criteria

Students enter and exit public alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure for a variety of reasons and on an individual basis. Survey findings indicate that a variety of behaviors were sufficient reasons in themselves for transfer to alternative schools and programs among districts. Of the behaviors that might be considered disruptive to others (possession or use of a firearm or other weapon, possession or distribution of alcohol or drugs, physical attacks or fights, and disruptive verbal behavior), results show that large districts, districts in the Southeast, districts with a high minority enrollment, and districts with a high poverty concentration tended to be more likely than their counterparts to regard these reasons as sufficient in themselves for transfer to an alternative school or program.

Most districts (74 percent) have a policy allowing all students to return to regular schools, although some districts (25 percent) allow only some students, and a 1 percent of districts do not allow any students to return. The reasons most likely to be deemed "very important" by districts in determining whether students could return to regular schools were improved attitude and behavior (82 percent) and student motivation to return (81 percent).

Staffing, Curriculum and Services, and Collaboration

Although 86 percent of districts hired teachers specifically to teach in alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, and 49 percent of districts reported that teachers were transferred by choice from a regular school, 10 percent of districts assigned teachers involuntarily to teach in such schools and programs. Large districts, districts with a high minority enrollment, and districts with a high poverty concentration were more likely than their counterpart districts to report assigning teachers involuntarily.

With respect to curriculum and services, findings indicate that the nation's districts with public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students are making efforts to ensure that at-risk students are supported by a network of services and innovations in curriculum that help promote their success. For example, over 75 percent of the districts had policies requiring curricula leading

[30] This figure may be higher, because at-risk students enrolled in public alternative schools not administered by sampled districts (e.g., regional schools) were not counted in this survey.

toward a regular high school diploma, academic counseling, remedial instruction, smaller class size, opportunity for self-paced instruction, career counseling, and crisis/behavior intervention. Of the 16 services and practices listed in the survey, districts reported policies requiring a mean of 9.5. For the most part, large districts were more likely than small ones to require individual services and practices.

Many districts with public alternative schools and programs also appeared to be collaborating with a variety of agencies to provide services to students. Overall, districts collaborated with a mean of 6.9 agencies (out of 12 listed in the survey) in providing services. Again, for the most part, large districts were more likely than small ones to collaborate with various agencies.

This study has presented a snapshot of alternative schools and programs for students at risk of education failure during the 2000–01 school year. Since this is the first national survey of its kind, it is difficult to say in which direction districts are moving with respect to various facets of public alternative education. Future research will need to employ similar measures to determine whether public alternative education is becoming more or less established in the nation's public school system and whether it is progressing in its service to the nation's at-risk students.

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Appendix A

Survey Methodology

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Fast Response Survey System

The Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) was established in 1975 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education. The FRSS is designed to collect small amounts of issue-oriented data with minimal burden on respondents and within a relatively short timeframe. Surveys are generally limited to three pages of questions, with a response burden of about 30 minutes per respondent. Sample sizes are relatively small (usually about 1,000 to 1,500 respondents per survey) so that data collection can be completed quickly. Data are weighted to produce national estimates of the sampled education sector. The sample size permits limited breakouts by classification variables. However, as the number of categories within the classification variables increases, the sample size within categories decreases, which results in larger sampling errors for the breakouts by classification variables. The FRSS collects data from state education agencies, local education agencies, public and private elementary and secondary schools, public school teachers, and public libraries.

Sample Selection

Before the main survey was mailed out, a pilot study was conducted. Given the lack of available information about the numbers of alternative *programs* across the nation (the Common Core of Data (CCD) only includes data on alternative *schools*), the pilot study aimed to determine the number of alternative programs that existed in regular districts[31] both with and without alternative schools. The results of the pilot study were used to inform the main study's sample to increase the likelihood that the districts sampled would be representative of the nation's districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students and provide a sufficient number of cases to allow breakouts of results by classification variables (such as district size and region). In addition, it was anticipated that the pilot study would shed light on the extent to which the 1998–99 NCES CCD was up-to-date and complete with respect to information on the nation's alternative schools. Three hundred and thirty-seven districts from the 1998–99 NCES CCD Public Universe File were selected for the pilot.

Based on the results of the pilot study, it was concluded that an estimated 45 to 55 percent of the districts in the CCD file had at least one alternative school or program. Moreover, the information available in the 1998–99 CCD file about the presence of alternative schools was not in line with the pilot study results. For example, the pilot study revealed that while 87 percent of districts did not report any alternative schools in the CCD, over 40 percent of these actually had at least one alternative school. Further, among the 11 percent of districts (about 1,800) that reported one or more alternative schools in the CCD, about 10 percent did not operate such schools at the time of the pilot study. These differences may have been due to the time elapsed between 1998–99 and 2000–01; alternative education is variable and fluid, and while many districts may have established new alternative schools between 1998 and 2001, others may have eliminated them. Also, there may have been differences in the definitions of alternative schools employed for the pilot study and for the CCD (e.g., unlike the CCD, the pilot study was limited to alternative schools for students at risk of education failure). The implication of these results was that considerable "oversampling" was required to obtain the desired number of eligible districts for analysis purposes.

Information from the pilot study helped guide the allocation of the total sample to the two major categories of districts: districts that reported alternative schools in the CCD and those that did not report alternative schools in the CCD. Within each category, the samples were further allocated to district size strata (less than 2,500, 2,500 to 9,999, 10,000 or more) in rough proportion to the aggregate square root of the enrollment in the stratum. The sampling frame was also ordered by metropolitan status (urban, suburban, rural) and

[31] Regular districts are defined in the 1998–99 CCD as one of two types: 1) A local school district that is not a component of a supervisory union, and 2) a local school district component of a supervisory union sharing a superintendent and administrative services with other local school districts.

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region (Northeast, Southeast, Central, West) to induce additional implicit stratification. Within each primary stratum, districts were selected systematically and with equal probabilities.

The sampling frame constructed consisted of 14,619 regular public school districts during the 1998–99 school year. After the stratum sample sizes were determined, a final sample of 1,609 districts was systematically selected from the sorted file using independent random starts. The 50 states and the District of Columbia were included in the sample, while school districts in the outlying U.S. territories were excluded. Districts are of three types: unified, secondary, and elementary. Unified districts serve students across all grade levels and comprised 83 percent of the total sample (table A-1). Secondary districts comprised 2 percent, and elementary districts (i.e., serving grades no higher than grade 8) comprised 15 percent of the sample.

Respondent and Response Rates

Questionnaires and cover letters were mailed to districts in January 2001. The cover letter indicated that the questionnaire was to be completed by the district-level personnel most knowledgeable about the district's alternative schools and programs. The cover letter also indicated that collaboration was encouraged if needed.

Telephone followup was conducted from mid-February 2001 through mid-April 2001 for districts that did not respond to the initial questionnaire mailing. Completed questionnaires were received from 1,540 districts. Of the 1,540 districts that completed surveys, 6 were later excluded from the sample after determining that they were not regular districts, but rather, were "regional" districts that served multiple districts and special populations of students (i.e., at-risk or special education). The weighted response rate was 97 percent. Weighted item nonresponse rates for 93 percent of individual questionnaire items were below 1 percent. Weighted item nonresponse rates for the remaining 7 percent (8 questionnaire items) ranged between 1 to 2.6 percent.

In addition to the survey questionnaires, respondents were asked to complete lists of the alternative schools and programs in their districts (if applicable). Data retrieval included telephone follow-up calls for lists that did not include the same number of schools and programs as reported in question 2 of the survey, as well as for lists that included schools or programs that did not appear to fit the survey definition (i.e., ABC Magnet School, or XYZ School for the Gifted and Talented). The weighted response rate for the list collection was 97 percent.

Table A-1.—Number and percentage distribution of districts overall, and districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, by district type: 2001

District type	District sample		National estimate of all districts		Districts with alternative schools and programs in sample		National estimate of all districts with alternative schools and programs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unified	1,266	83	10,820	76	796	94	5,124	92
Elementary	230	15	3,103	22	28	3	240	4
Secondary	36	2	365	3	23	3	194	3

NOTE: Two sampled districts were not included, because no data were available on grades levels for them in the 2000–01 CCD.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Sampling and Nonsampling Errors

The responses were weighted to produce national estimates (see table A-2). The weights were designed to adjust for the variable probabilities of selection and differential nonresponse. The findings in this report are estimates based on the sample selected and, consequently, are subject to sampling variability.

The survey estimates are also subject to nonsampling errors that can arise because of nonobservation (nonresponse or noncoverage) errors, errors of reporting, and errors made in data collection. These errors can sometimes bias the data. Nonsampling errors may include such problems as misrecording of responses; incorrect editing and coding; differences related to the

Table A-2.—Number and percentage distribution of districts in the sample, districts with alternative schools and programs in the sample, and respective estimated numbers and percentage distributions in the nation, by district characteristics: 2001

District characteristic	District sample		National estimate of all districts		Districts with alternative schools and programs in sample		National estimate of all districts with alternative schools and programs	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,534	100	14,321	100	848	100	5,574	100
Metropolitan status								
Urban	179	12	810	6	153	18	535	10
Suburban	717	47	5,896	41	407	48	2,390	43
Rural	638	42	7,616	53	288	34	2,649	48
District enrollment size								
Less than 2,500	739	48	10,423	73	215	25	2,683	48
2,500 to 9,999	501	33	3,090	22	351	41	2,123	38
10,000 or more	294	19	808	6	282	33	768	14
Region								
Northeast	303	20	2,908	20	129	15	895	16
Southeast	249	16	1,588	11	221	26	1,264	23
Central	493	32	5,415	38	192	23	1,490	27
West	489	32	4,411	31	306	36	1,925	35
Percent minority enrollment[1]								
5 percent or less	539	35	6,422	45	181	22	1,669	30
6 to 20 percent	380	25	3,390	24	222	26	1,448	26
21 to 50 percent	323	21	2,489	18	225	27	1,275	23
More than 50 percent	273	18	1,840	13	212	25	1,142	21
Poverty concentration[2]								
10 percent or less	483	31	4,393	32	225	27	1,383	25
11 to 20 percent	558	36	5,109	37	333	39	2,189	40
More than 20 percent	462	30	4,366	31	285	34	1,949	35

[1]Estimates are based on the 1,515 districts for which data on percent minority enrollment were available.

[2]Estimates are based on the 1,503 districts for which data on poverty concentration were available.

NOTE: Details may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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particular time the survey was conducted; or errors in data preparation. While general sampling theory can be used in part to determine how to estimate the sampling variability of a statistic, nonsampling errors are not easy to measure and, for measurement purposes, usually require that an experiment be conducted as part of the data collection procedures or that data external to the study be used.

To minimize the potential for nonsampling errors, the questions were pretested with respondents like those who completed the questionnaire. During the design of the survey and survey pretest, an effort was made to check for consistency of interpretation of questions and to eliminate ambiguous items. The questionnaire and instructions were extensively reviewed by the National Center for Education Statistics, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), U.S. Department of Education. Manual and machine editing of the questionnaire responses were conducted to check the data for accuracy and consistency. Cases with missing or inconsistent items were recontacted by telephone. Data were keyed with 100 percent verification.

Variances

The standard error is a measure of the variability of estimates due to sampling. It indicates the variability of a sample estimate that would be obtained from all possible samples of a given design and size. Standard errors are used as a measure of the precision expected from a particular sample. If all possible samples were surveyed under similar conditions, intervals of 1.96 standard errors below to 1.96 standard errors above a particular statistic would include the true population parameter being estimated in about 95 percent of the samples. This is a 95 percent confidence interval. For example, the estimated percentage of suburban districts that reported having alternative schools or programs during the 2000–01 school year was 40.8 percent, and the estimated standard error was 2.09 percent. The 95 percent confidence interval for the statistic extends from [40.8 – (2.09 times 1.96)] to [40.8 + (2.09 times 1.96)], or from 36.7 to 44.9 percent. Tables of standard errors for each table and figure in the report are provided in appendix B.

Estimates of standard errors were computed using a technique known as jackknife replication. As with any replication method, jackknife replication involves constructing a number of subsamples (replicates) from the full sample and computing the statistic of interest for each replicate. The mean square error of the replicate estimates around the full sample estimate provides an estimate of the variances of the statistics. To construct the replications, 50 stratified subsamples of the full sample were created and then dropped one at a time to define 50 jackknife replicates. A computer program (WesVar4.0) was used to calculate the estimates of standard errors. WesVar4.0 is a stand-alone Windows application that computes sampling errors for a wide variety of statistics (totals, percents, ratios, log-odds ratios, general functions of estimates in tables, linear regression parameters, and logistic regression parameters).

The test statistics used in the analysis were calculated using the jackknife variances and thus appropriately reflected the complex nature of the sample design. In particular, an adjusted chi-square test using Satterthwaite's approximation to the design effect was used in the analysis of the two-way tables. Bonferroni adjustments were made to control for multiple comparisons where appropriate. For example, for an "experiment-wise" comparison involving g pairwise comparisons, each difference was tested at the 0.05/g significance level to control for the fact that g differences were simultaneously tested. The Bonferroni adjustment results in a more conservative critical value being used when judging statistical significance. This means that a comparison that would have been significant with a critical value of 1.96 may not be significant with the more conservative critical value. For example, the critical value for comparisons between any two of the four categories of region is 2.64, rather than 1.96 which would be used for two categories. This means that there must be a larger difference between the estimates when there are multiple

pairs of comparisons for there to be a statistically significant difference.

Evaluation of Program Type

Given the importance of the definition of alternative schools and programs for this survey, and given that studies have shown that respondents do not always carefully read definitions, two steps were taken. First, as mentioned earlier, telephone followup was carried out during data collection in cases where lists did not include the same number of schools and programs as reported in question 2 of the survey. In addition, followup was conducted for lists that included schools or programs that did not appear to fit the survey definition (i.e., ABC Magnet School, or XYZ School for the Gifted and Talented). These subsequent conversations with respondents allowed for resolution of discrepancies and the removal of schools or programs from lists that did not fit the survey definition.

Second, a follow-up study was conducted to determine whether respondents had read the survey definition when completing the questionnaire. Respondents who returned questionnaires by mail or fax were of concern because there was no phone interviewer to ensure that the respondent understood and had read through the definition. Of the 848 districts that reported having at least one alternative school or program for students at risk of education failure, 771 completed the questionnaire by mail or fax. Of these, a random sample of every seventh district was selected, resulting in a sample size of 111 districts.

An initial call was made to districts in the sample to ascertain whether the original respondent was still at the district, to identify some other respondent if necessary, and to arrange an appointment. The survey definition was then faxed to the respondent. When respondents were recontacted, interviewers stated that the purpose of the call was to examine data collection procedures. After confirming that the respondent had read through the definition, respondents were asked how many alternative schools and programs were in their district during the 2000–01 school year that fit the definition. If the number reported was the same as in the original survey, the interviewer closed the interview. If the number was smaller or larger, the interviewer attempted, by referring to the schools and programs originally reported by respondents in the list collection, to ascertain why this was the case.

Of the 111 districts in the sample, data were collected from 100. Of these, 86 reported a number of alternative schools and programs that matched the number reported in the main survey. Fourteen cases did not match, and while 7 reported a number that was smaller, 7 reported a number that was larger than the one given at the time of the main survey. Of the 7 districts that reported a larger number than in the main survey, the reasons fell into 2 categories. First, in 5 cases, respondents admitted their oversight in neglecting to report alternative schools or programs in the original survey. Second, in 2 cases, respondents said that the definition was unclear or "did not sink in." Of the 7 districts that reported a smaller number, reasons given fell into two categories. In 4 cases, respondents mistakenly reported programs where students spent less than 50 percent of their instructional time. In 3 cases, respondents mistakenly reported schools or programs that were not administered by their district. There were no districts in the sample that reported a smaller number in the follow-up study because of having mistakenly included schools or programs not for at-risk students in the main survey. It may be concluded then that all of the schools and programs reported in the main survey (at least by sampled districts in the follow-up) were for students at risk of education failure.

Definitions of Analysis Variables

District enrollment size – total number of students enrolled in the district, according to the 1998–99 CCD.

Less than 2,500

2,500 to 9,999

10,000 or more

Metropolitan status – metropolitan status of district, as defined in the 1998–99 CCD.

Urban: Primarily serves a central city of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Suburban: Serves an MSA, but not primarily its central city.

Rural: Does not serve an MSA.

Geographic region – One of four regions used by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the National Education Association. Obtained from the 1998–99 CCD.

Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont

Southeast: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia

Central: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming

Percent minority enrollment in the school – The percent of students enrolled in the district whose race or ethnicity is classified as one of the following: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black (non-Hispanic), or Hispanic, based on data in the 1998–99 CCD file.

5 percent or less

6 to 20 percent

21 to 50 percent

More than 50 percent

Percent of students at or below the poverty level – This item served as the measurement of the concentration of poverty within the district. It is based on Title I data, which the U.S. Department of Education uses for estimates of school-age children in poverty to allocate federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for education programs to aid disadvantaged children. The estimates are provided by the Bureau of the Census, and, for the purpose of this report, were broken into the following categories, based on the percentage of children ages 5–17 in families below the poverty level within districts in 1996–97:

10 percent or less

11 to 20 percent

More than 20 percent

It is important to note that some of the district characteristics used for independent analyses are related to each other. For example, internal analysis of sampled districts' characteristics within the data set revealed that enrollment size and metropolitan status of districts are related, with urban districts typically being larger than rural districts (data not shown in tables). Similarly, poverty concentration and minority enrollment are related, with districts with a high minority enrollment also more likely to have a high concentration of poverty. In addition, a relationship may exist between district type (unified, elementary, and secondary) and particular district characteristics. Other relationships between analysis variables may exist.

Because of the relatively small sample used in this study, it is difficult to separate the independent effects of these variables. Their existence, however, should be considered in the interpretation of the data presented in this report.

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Appendix B

Tables of Standard Errors

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Table B-1.—Standard errors for table 1: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for as-risk students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Percent
Total	1.3
Metropolitan status	
Urban	5.4
Suburban	2.1
Rural	1.7
District enrollment size	
Less than 2,500	1.8
2,500 to 9,999	2.1
10,000 or more	1.4
Region	
Northeast	2.4
Southeast	3.6
Central	2.2
West	2.4
Percent minority enrollment	
5 percent or less	1.9
6 to 20 percent	2.8
21 to 50 percent	3.1
More than 50 percent	4.1
Poverty concentration	
10 percent or less	2.2
11 to 20 percent	2.2
More than 20 percent	2.2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-2.—Standard errors for table 2: Total number of public alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, number of students enrolled, and number of specific types: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristics of alternative schools and programs	Number
Public alternative schools and programs	309
Students enrolled in alternative schools and programs	36,065
Special education students with IEPs enrolled in alternative schools and programs	3,588
Alternative schools and programs housed in a separate facility	243
Alternative schools and programs in juvenile detention centers	52
Alternative schools and programs that are community-based	66
Charter schools for at-risk students	28

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-3.—Standard errors for table 3: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by number of schools and/or programs per district, by district characteristics: Academic year 1999–2000

Characteristic	One alternative school or program	Two alternative schools and/or programs	Three or more alternative schools and/or programs
Total	2.0	1.6	1.1
Metropolitan status			
Urban	5.2	3.0	5.6
Suburban	2.6	2.1	2.0
Rural	2.9	2.5	1.4
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	2.9	2.3	1.5
2,500 to 9,999	2.5	2.4	1.9
10,000 or more	3.2	2.6	2.7
Region			
Northeast	4.7	3.2	3.3
Southeast	3.3	2.4	2.3
Central	4.4	3.7	2.1
West	3.0	2.5	1.8
Percent minority enrollment			
5 percent or less	3.9	3.0	2.1
6 to 20 percent	3.7	3.0	2.3
21 to 50 percent	3.6	2.6	3.1
More than 50 percent	4.3	3.5	2.8
Poverty concentration			
10 percent or less	3.5	2.5	2.3
11 to 20 percent	3.4	2.8	2.2
More than 20 percent	3.2	2.3	1.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-4.—Standard errors for table 4: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by percent of students enrolled as of October 1, 2000, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Less than 1 percent of total district enrollment	1 to 1.99 percent of total district enrollment	2 to 2.99 percent of total district enrollment	3 percent or more of total district enrollment
Total	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.5
Metropolitan status				
Urban	4.5	3.6	3.1	3.0
Suburban	2.8	2.7	2.4	1.7
Rural	2.9	2.7	2.3	2.8
District enrollment size				
Less than 2,500	3.2	3.3	2.9	3.0
2,500 to 9,999	2.1	2.3	1.6	1.5
10,000 or more	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.0
Region				
Northeast	4.7	4.6	2.4	3.1
Southeast	4.1	3.8	2.3	2.0
Central	3.6	4.0	2.7	3.6
West	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.7
Percent minority enrollment				
5 percent or less	3.5	3.7	2.3	3.2
6 to 20 percent	4.0	3.4	2.8	2.6
21 to 50 percent	3.4	3.5	3.6	2.6
More than 50 percent	3.8	3.8	3.5	4.0
Poverty concentration				
10 percent or less	3.9	3.4	2.4	2.7
11 to 20 percent	2.6	2.9	2.6	2.3
More than 20 percent	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.8

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-5.—Standard errors for table 5: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by percent of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in these schools and programs as of October 1, 2000, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Less than 3 percent of students have IEPs	3 to 9.99 percent of students have IEPs	10 to 19.99 percent of students have IEPs	20 percent or more of students have IEPs
Total	2.0	1.4	1.4	1.7
Metropolitan status				
Urban	5.3	4.4	4.0	4.3
Suburban	3.0	2.0	2.4	2.5
Rural	2.7	2.2	2.2	2.6
District enrollment size				
Less than 2,500	3.3	2.2	2.6	2.9
2,500 to 9,999	2.0	1.7	2.3	2.1
10,000 or more	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.2
Region				
Northeast	5.5	2.4	3.4	5.7
Southeast	3.7	2.2	2.6	4.2
Central	4.3	2.2	3.3	3.7
West	3.1	3.0	2.7	3.3
Percent minority enrollment				
5 percent or less	4.0	2.1	2.5	4.2
6 to 20 percent	4.0	2.6	3.5	4.0
21 to 50 percent	3.3	2.9	3.3	4.6
More than 50 percent	3.5	3.1	3.4	4.1
Poverty concentration				
10 percent or less	4.4	2.6	2.9	3.6
11 to 20 percent	2.6	1.9	2.8	3.0
More than 20 percent	2.7	2.7	2.1	2.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Table B-6.—Standard errors for table 6: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that were unable to enroll new students in an alternative school or program, by district characteristics: Academic year 1999–2000

Characteristic	Percent
Total	1.6
Metropolitan status	
Urban	4.5
Suburban	2.3
Rural	2.9
District enrollment size	
Less than 2,500	2.7
2,500 to 9,999	2.5
10,000 or more	2.7
Region	
Northeast	4.5
Southeast	3.0
Central	3.7
West	3.0
Percent minority enrollment	
5 percent or less	4.0
6 to 20 percent	3.2
21 to 50 percent	4.0
More than 50 percent	2.6
Poverty concentration	
10 percent or less	3.8
11 to 20 percent	3.0
More than 20 percent	2.8

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-7.—Standard errors for table 7: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that employed various procedures when demand for enrollment exceeded available capacity within the last 3 years, by district characteristics: Academic years 1998–2001

Characteristic	Waiting list	Add staff or space	Provide home-bound instruction	Refer students to another district	Open new site	Refer students to private facility
Total	1.6	2.4	2.3	1.8	1.6	1.3
Metropolitan status						
Urban	4.0	5.4	4.8	2.0	4.6	3.2
Suburban	2.4	3.6	3.5	2.9	1.9	2.0
Rural	3.0	4.5	4.0	3.1	2.4	2.3
District enrollment size						
Less than 2,500	3.9	4.1	5.4	3.9	2.5	2.5
2,500 to 9,999	2.2	3.0	3.5	2.0	1.8	2.4
10,000 or more	2.9	3.4	3.2	2.3	2.9	1.9
Region						
Northeast	6.2	5.9	6.5	2.6	4.1	5.1
Southeast	4.0	4.6	3.9	3.4	2.3	2.0
Central	3.1	4.8	4.4	4.1	2.9	2.6
West	2.8	5.1	3.6	3.3	2.8	2.7
Percent minority enrollment						
5 percent or less	3.0	5.0	5.5	4.0	3.3	3.1
6 to 20 percent	4.1	5.1	4.1	3.[illegible]	3.0	3.1
21 to 50 percent	3.7	4.7	3.3	3.8	2.2	2.3
More than 50 percent	4.5	5.8	5.5	3.5	4.4	2.1
Poverty concentration						
10 percent or less	3.5	4.9	4.6	3.1	3.3	2.3
11 to 20 percent	2.5	3.1	2.9	3.3	2.2	2.5
More than 20 percent	4.0	4.8	4.4	3.2	2.8	2.4

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Table B-8.—Standard errors for table 8: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported that students could be transferred to an alternative school or program solely on the basis of various reasons, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs	Physical attacks or fights	Chronic truancy	Possession or use of a weapon (other than a firearm)	Continual academic failure
Total	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.0
Metropolitan status					
Urban	4.5	5.1	4.9	4.6	4.8
Suburban	3.5	3.7	3.0	3.6	3.1
Rural	2.9	2.8	3.3	2.9	2.9
District enrollment size					
Less than 2,500	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.3
2,500 to 9,999	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	3.0
10,000 or more	2.5	2.7	3.1	2.6	3.4
Region					
Northeast	5.4	5.2	5.4	5.3	5.3
Southeast	3.9	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.8
Central	4.4	3.4	4.0	3.9	4.2
West	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.1
Percent minority enrollment					
5 percent or less	4.3	4.2	4.6	4.7	2.9
6 to 20 percent	4.4	3.6	3.5	4.4	3.8
21 to 50 percent	4.3	4.2	3.8	4.6	3.9
More than 50 percent	4.3	4.2	4.0	4.5	4.7
Poverty concentration					
10 percent or less	4.3	4.0	4.0	4.4	4.0
11 to 20 percent	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.9	3.1
More than 20 percent	3.6	3.3	3.1	3.6	3.5

Table B-8.—Standard errors for table 8: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported that students could be transferred to an alternative school or program solely on the basis of various reasons, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01—Continued

Characteristic	Disruptive verbal behavior	Possession or use of a firearm	Arrest or involvement with juvenile justice system	Teen pregnancy/ parenthood	Mental health needs
Total	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.5	1.8
Metropolitan status					
Urban	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.9	4.2
Suburban	3.4	3.6	3.4	2.5	2.2
Rural	3.1	3.3	2.9	2.3	2.9
District enrollment size					
Less than 2,500	3.9	3.5	3.3	2.9	3.0
2,500 to 9,999	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.0	2.8
10,000 or more	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.8
Region					
Northeast	4.8	5.2	4.3	2.7	3.8
Southeast	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.3	4.9
Central	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.8	4.0
West	2.8	3.2	3.4	3.1	2.8
Percent minority enrollment					
5 percent or less	3.8	4.6	4.0	3.1	3.3
6 to 20 percent	3.3	3.9	3.5	3.7	3.2
21 to 50 percent	3.8	4.2	4.1	3.3	3.4
More than 50 percent	3.7	5.0	4.7	3.7	3.6
Poverty concentration					
10 percent or less	3.7	4.6	3.8	3.4	3.0
11 to 20 percent	3.0	2.9	3.4	2.7	3.0
More than 20 percent	3.2	3.8	3.6	2.5	3.2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-9.—Standard errors for table 9: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported the extent to which various means influence the placement of special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in alternative schools and programs: Academic year 2000–01

Means of placement	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
IEP team decision	1.0	1.3	1.6	1.9
Support of director of special education	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.3
Regular school staff recommendation	1.7	1.6	2.1	1.8
Student request	1.9	2.3	2.2	1.6
Parent request	2.0	2.2	2.2	1.5
As a result of Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)	2.1	1.6	1.8	1.4
Referral by juvenile justice system	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-10.—Standard errors for table 10: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported a policy that allows all, some, or no students enrolled to return to a regular school, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Yes, for all students	Yes, for some students	No, never for any students
Total	1.9	1.8	0.5
Metropolitan status			
Urban	3.6	3.6	†
Suburban	2.6	2.6	0.3
Rural	2.7	2.6	0.9
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	3.4	3.2	0.9
2,500 to 9,999	2.1	2.1	0.2
10,000 or more	3.0	3.0	†
Region			
Northeast	4.4	4.4	†
Southeast	3.8	3.8	†
Central	4.2	4.1	1.0
West	3.3	3.3	1.1
Percent minority enrollment			
5 percent or less	4.3	4.0	0.9
6 to 20 percent	3.0	3.0	†
21 to 50 percent	3.8	3.7	1.1
More than 50 percent	3.0	3.0	1.4
Poverty concentration			
10 percent or less	2.9	2.8	1.0
11 to 20 percent	3.0	3.0	0.7
More than 20 percent	2.9	2.9	0.8

† Estimate of standard error is not derived because it is based on a statistic estimated at 0 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-11.—Standard errors for table 11: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that cited various reasons as "very important" in determining whether an enrolled student can return to a regular school, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Improved attitude or behavior	Student motivation to return	Approval of alternative school/program staff	Improved grades	Approval of the regular school administrator or counselor	Student readiness by standardized assessment	Availability of space in regular school
Total	1.5	1.8	1.6	2.0	2.1	1.4	0.8
Metropolitan status							
Urban	2.8	3.7	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.5	1.4
Suburban	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.1	3.0	1.7	1.3
Rural	2.6	2.5	2.5	3.5	3.2	2.7	1.0
District enrollment size							
Less than 2,500	2.5	2.5	2.9	3.4	3.6	2.7	1.2
2,500 to 9,999	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.3	1.3	0.9
10,000 or more	2.1	2.9	3.4	3.3	2.8	2.1	1.1
Region							
Northeast	4.9	3.8	5.8	5.5	5.0	2.4	1.7
Southeast	2.7	3.6	3.5	4.4	3.8	3.1	0.7
Central	3.1	2.4	3.1	4.2	4.6	2.6	1.5
West	3.2	2.5	3.5	3.3	3.5	2.3	1.6
Percent minority enrollment							
5 percent or less	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.9	4.1	3.3	1.5
6 to 20 percent	3.0	3.0	3.5	4.1	4.2	2.0	1.3
21 to 50 percent	2.8	3.7	3.3	3.9	3.2	3.1	1.8
More than 50 percent	3.2	3.9	3.9	4.4	4.2	2.3	0.9
Poverty concentration							
10 percent or less	3.0	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.7	2.3	2.1
11 to 20 percent	2.7	2.5	3.2	3.1	3.0	2.0	0.8
More than 20 percent	2.6	3.0	2.9	3.6	3.3	2.8	1.2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-12.—Standard errors for table 12: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that used various practices for hiring alternative school and program teachers, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Hired specifically to teach in alternative schools and programs	Transferred by choice from a regular school	Involuntarily assigned
Total	1.6	2.1	1.1
Metropolitan status			
Urban	2.4	4.5	3.9
Suburban	2.0	2.6	1.4
Rural	2.6	3.4	1.8
District enrollment size			
Less than 2,500	2.7	3.5	1.8
2,500 to 9,999	1.7	2.6	1.5
10,000 or more	1.4	2.3	2.4
Region			
Northeast	3.9	4.1	1.1
Southeast	3.2	3.7	2.9
Central	2.7	4.2	2.2
West	2.0	3.9	1.9
Percent minority enrollment			
5 percent or less	2.9	3.9	2.0
6 to 20 percent	2.3	3.0	2.0
21 to 50 percent	3.0	5.0	2.2
More than 50 percent	3.8	4.9	3.2
Poverty concentration			
10 percent or less	2.4	3.6	1.1
11 to 20 percent	2.4	3.4	1.8
More than 20 percent	3.2	3.5	2.5

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Table B-13.—Standard errors for table 13: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported various required services or practices be made routinely available to enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Curricula for regular high school diploma	Academic counseling	Smaller class size	Remedial instruction	Opportunity for self-paced instruction	Crisis or behavioral intervention	Career counseling	Psycho-logical counseling
Total	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	2.1
Metropolitan status								
Urban	1.3	2.5	2.5	2.9	3.3	3.3	3.8	4.2
Suburban	1.5	1.8	2.0	2.4	2.1	2.3	2.8	3.5
Rural	2.0	1.9	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.2	3.2
District enrollment size								
Less than 2,500	2.0	2.3	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.4	3.6
2,500 to 9,999	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.5	3.0
10,000 or more	1.1	2.1	1.3	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.0	3.3
Region								
Northeast	2.3	2.5	2.6	3.7	4.1	4.2	3.8	3.5
Southeast	2.8	2.9	1.9	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.9
Central	2.7	2.3	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.6	3.1	3.6
West	1.9	2.9	3.3	2.8	2.0	3.4	2.8	4.0
Percent minority enrollment								
5 percent or less	2.3	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.8
6 to 20 percent	2.3	2.6	2.5	3.1	2.5	3.2	3.9	3.6
21 to 50 percent	2.1	3.1	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.8
More than 50 percent	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.3	2.5	3.8	3.4	5.1
Poverty concentration								
10 percent or less	2.1	2.5	2.8	3.2	3.6	3.3	3.5	3.6
11 to 20 percent	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.5	3.1	2.5	3.4
More than 20 percent	2.3	3.1	2.7	2.4	2.3	3.0	3.0	3.2

Table B-13.—Standard errors for table 13: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that reported various required services or practices be made routinely available to enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01—Continued

Characteristic	Social work services	Vocational or skills training	Opportunity to take classes elsewhere	Preparation for the GED exam	Peer mediation	Extended school day/year	Security personnel on site	Evening or weekend classes
Total	2.2	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.8	1.5	2.0
Metropolitan status								
Urban	4.4	5.0	4.5	5.1	5.3	4.2	4.8	4.4
Suburban	3.0	3.2	2.6	3.1	2.6	2.2	2.5	2.3
Rural	3.4	2.9	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.1	2.1	3.4
District enrollment size								
Less than 2,500	4.0	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.7	2.8	2.4	3.3
2,500 to 9,999	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.7	2.3	2.5
10,000 or more	3.3	2.8	3.0	3.7	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.1
Region								
Northeast	4.6	4.9	4.7	3.7	4.6	4.8	4.0	5.0
Southeast	4.4	4.1	3.6	4.0	3.8	2.9	2.9	3.1
Central	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.0	4.2	3.6	3.3	4.1
West	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.8	3.5	3.5	2.2	3.5
Percent minority enrollment								
5 percent or less	4.4	4.9	4.1	4.3	4.2	3.5	2.9	3.6
6 to 20 percent	3.4	4.5	4.0	3.8	3.8	3.2	2.9	3.4
21 to 50 percent	4.2	4.9	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.5	3.5	3.3
More than 50 percent	4.6	4.5	4.9	4.8	4.2	4.9	3.8	3.9
Poverty concentration								
10 percent or less	4.1	3.6	3.4	4.0	3.5	3.2	2.9	3.3
11 to 20 percent	3.7	3.4	3.0	3.4	3.3	2.9	2.6	3.0
More than 20 percent	4.0	4.1	4.1	3.7	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.5

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Table B-14.—Standard errors for table 14: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that collaborated with various agencies in order to provide services for enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01

Characteristic	Juvenile justice system	Community mental health agency	Police or sheriff's department	Child protective services	Health and human services agency or hospital	Drug and/or alcohol clinic
Total	1.7	1.9	1.9	2.5	2.1	2.0
Metropolitan status						
Urban	3.9	4.6	4.5	4.1	4.3	4.4
Suburban	2.5	2.4	2.6	3.8	3.1	3.0
Rural	2.6	3.1	3.7	3.5	2.8	2.8
District enrollment size						
Less than 2,500	3.1	3.4	3.5	3.9	3.2	3.6
2,500 to 9,999	1.9	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.8	2.6
10,000 or more	1.8	2.3	2.8	3.0	2.8	3.2
Region						
Northeast	4.9	4.7	4.7	5.4	5.0	5.2
Southeast	2.8	3.2	3.2	3.6	4.1	4.1
Central	3.6	4.2	3.6	4.5	3.5	4.4
West	2.1	2.9	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.5
Percent minority enrollment						
5 percent or less	3.4	4.3	4.0	4.7	3.9	4.2
6 to 20 percent	2.5	2.9	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.9
21 to 50 percent	3.0	2.9	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.4
More than 50 percent	3.1	4.0	3.9	4.3	4.8	4.4
Poverty concentration						
10 percent or less	3.9	3.1	3.5	4.8	3.9	4.2
11 to 20 percent	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	3.4
More than 20 percent	2.5	3.0	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.3

Table B-14.—Standard errors for table 14: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that collaborated with various agencies in order to provide services for enrolled students, by district characteristics: Academic year 2000–01—Continued

Characteristic	Community organization	Family organizations or associations	Crisis intervention center	Family planning/child care/child placement agency	Job placement center	Parks and recreation department
Total	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.3	1.5
Metropolitan status						
Urban	4.8	4.0	4.7	4.2	5.0	5.1
Suburban	2.7	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.3
Rural	3.5	3.4	2.9	2.8	3.7	2.4
District enrollment size						
Less than 2,500	3.7	3.9	3.4	3.5	3.8	2.8
2,500 to 9,999	2.7	2.6	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.2
10,000 or more	2.5	2.7	3.5	2.9	3.3	2.7
Region						
Northeast	4.7	4.2	4.2	4.8	4.2	3.3
Southeast	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.5	4.0	3.0
Central	4.4	4.6	3.8	4.5	4.5	3.5
West	3.1	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.0
Percent minority enrollment						
5 percent or less	4.4	5.0	3.8	4.1	4.5	3.0
6 to 20 percent	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.1	4.0	2.9
21 to 50 percent	3.2	3.7	3.4	4.2	3.8	3.7
More than 50 percent	3.9	3.9	4.3	4.3	4.2	3.7
Poverty concentration						
10 percent or less	4.4	4.4	4.1	3.8	4.0	3.1
11 to 20 percent	3.5	3.2	2.7	2.8	4.0	2.9
More than 20 percent	3.7	3.3	3.1	3.4	3.3	2.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

Table B-15.—Standard errors for figures and for data not shown in tables: Academic years 1999–2001

Item	Estimate	Standard Error
Figure 1: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students that offered alternative schools and programs for prekindergarten through grade 12: Academic year 2000–01		
PK	1	0.3
K	7	1.0
1st	10	1.2
2nd	11	1.3
3rd	13	1.4
4th	17	1.6
5th	21	1.8
6th	46	2.2
7th	63	2.1
8th	67	1.9
9th	88	1.4
10th	92	1.3
11th	92	1.2
12th	92	1.1
Figure 2: Percent of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students where new enrollment needs exceeded available capacity between the months of August 1999 and June 2000, by month: Academic year 1999–2000		
August	21	2.9
September	35	4.0
October	45	4.1
November	57	2.9
December	56	3.2
January	58	2.7
February	52	3.1
March	55	3.3
April	57	2.7
May	53	3.0
June	23	3.3
Figure 3: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by the number of various services or practices made routinely available to enrolled students: Academic year 2000–01		
0 to 6 required services	18	1.4
7 to 11 required services	52	2.1
12 to 16 required services	30	2.1
Figure 4: Percentage distribution of districts with alternative schools and programs for at-risk students, grouped by the number of various agencies the district reported collaborating with to provide services to enrolled students: Academic year 2000–01		
Collaboration with 0 to 4 other agencies	28	2.3
Collaboration with 5 to 8 other agencies	34	1.8
Collaboration with 9 to 12 other agencies	38	1.8
Section 2, Enrollment in Public Alternative Schools and Programs		
Percent of all alternative education students who were special education students with IEPs	12	2.0
Overall percentage of special education students with IEPs within all public schools	13	†
Percent of districts that had students enrolled in alternative schools and programs as of October 1, 2000 [that] reported having no special education students with IEPs	27	2.0
Percent of districts reporting no cases where demand exceeded capacity in last 3 years	46	2.2

Table B-15.—Standard errors for figures and for data not shown in tables: Academic years 1999–2001—Continued

Item	Estimate	Standard Error
Section 3, Alternative Schools and Programs: Entrance and Exit Criteria		
Percent of districts that indicated no reasons were sufficient in themselves to transfer students	20	1.6
Mean number of sole reasons for transfer reported by districts	4.3	0.1
Section 4, Staffing, Curriculum and Services, and Collaboration		
Mean number of services required	9.5	0.1
Mean number of collaborations with other agencies	6.9	0.2

† Estimate of standard error is not derived because it is based on the universe of all public schools within the 2000–01 CCD file.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "District Survey of Alternative Schools and Programs," FRSS 76, 2001.

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Appendix C

Survey Questionnaire

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

DISTRICT SURVEY OF ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

FAST RESPONSE SURVEY SYSTEM

FORM APPROVED
O.M.B. NO.: 1850-0733
EXPIRATION DATE: 07/2002

This survey is authorized by law (P.L. 103-382). While participation in this survey is voluntary, your cooperation is critical to make the results of this survey comprehensive, accurate, and timely.

LABEL

IF ABOVE INFORMATION IS INCORRECT, PLEASE MAKE CORRECTIONS DIRECTLY ON LABEL.

Name of person completing form:_____ Telephone:_____

Title/position: _____ Number of years at this school:_____

Best days and times to reach you (in case of questions):_____

E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

THANK YOU. PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS SURVEY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:	IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT:
WESTAT	Brian Kleiner
Attn: Brian Kleiner (716614)	800-937-8281, ext. 4469 or 301-294-4469
1650 Research Boulevard	Fax: 800-254-0984
Rockville, Maryland 20850-3819	E-mail: kleineb1@westat.com

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1850-0733. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collected. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4651. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this form, write directly to: National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

FRSS Form No. 76, 1/01

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DEFINITIONS FOR THIS SURVEY

Alternative schools and programs are designed to address the needs of students that typically cannot be met in regular schools. The students who attend alternative schools and programs are typically *at risk* of education failure (as indicated by poor grades, truancy, disruptive behavior, pregnancy, or similar factors associated with temporary or permanent withdrawal from school).

Alternative schools are usually housed in a separate facility where students are removed from regular schools. *Alternative programs* are usually housed within regular schools.

For the purposes of this survey, **include**:

- only alternative schools or programs for *at-risk* students,
- only alternative schools or programs *administered by your district*,
- only alternative schools or programs where the majority of students attend for at least *half* of their instructional time,
- charter schools (for at-risk students),
- alternative schools or programs (that are administered by your district) within juvenile detention centers,
- community-based schools or programs (administered by your district, but located within community organizations (e.g., boys and girls clubs, community or recreational centers)),
- alternative schools or programs that operate during weekday evenings or weekends.

For the purposes of this survey, **exclude**:

- alternative schools or programs that are *not* for at-risk students (e.g., gifted and talented programs, magnet schools),
- alternative schools or programs *not* administered by your district,
- alternative schools or programs where the majority of students attend for less than half of their instructional time,
- schools or programs that exclusively serve special education students,
- vocational education programs (unless specifically designated for at-risk students),
- child care/day care centers,
- privately run sites contracted by your district,
- short-term in-school suspension programs (lasting 2 weeks or less), detention, or in-home programs for ill or injured students.

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a systematic process for describing problem behavior, identifying environmental factors and setting events that predict the problem behavior, and guiding the development of effective and efficient behavior support plans.

This questionnaire is intended for the person or persons most knowledgeable about the alternative schools and programs in your school district. Please feel free to collaborate with others who are able to help provide the required information.

I. Basic Information About Alternative Schools and Programs in Your District

1. During the current school year (2000-2001), are there any alternative schools or programs in your district?

   Yes ..... 1 *(Continue with question 2.)* No..... 2 *(Stop. Complete respondent section on front and return questionnaire.)*

2. How many alternative schools and programs do you currently have in your district? _____

3. Of those schools and programs in question 2, how many are...

   a. Housed within a separate facility, i.e., not within a regular school? ..... _____
   b. Charter schools? ..... _____
   c. Schools in juvenile detention centers? ..... _____
   d. Community-based programs? ..... _____

4. During the current school year (2000-2001), what grades are taught in your district's alternative schools and programs? *(Circle all that apply.)*

   PK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 Ungraded

II. Enrollment

5. As of October 1, 2000, about how many students in your district were enrolled in alternative schools and programs? _____ students

6. Of those students, about how many were special education students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)? _____ students

7a. In any month during the **1999-2000** school year, were any of your district's alternative schools and programs unable to enroll new students because of staffing or space limitations?

   Yes ..... 1 *(Continue with question 7b.)* No..... 2 *(Skip to question 8.)*

7b. During which months of the **1999-2000** school year were any of your district's alternative schools and programs unable to enroll new students because of staffing or space limitations? *(Check all that apply)*

a. August	☐	g. February	☐
b. September	☐	h. March	☐
c. October	☐	i. April	☐
d. November	☐	j. May	☐
e. December	☐	k. June	☐
f. January	☐		

8. In the past 3 years, what was your district's procedure when demand for enrollment in alternative schools and programs exceeded available capacity? *If not applicable, check here* ☐ *and skip to question 9.*

   (Circle one on each line.)

	Yes	No
a. Put students on waiting list	1	2
b. Increase capacity by adding staff/space	1	2
c. Provide home-bound instruction	1	2
d. Open new site	1	2
e. Refer students to another district	1	2
f. Refer students to private facility	1	2
g. Other (specify) _____	1	2

III. Entry and Exit Procedures

9. Can students in your district be transferred to alternative schools and programs solely on the basis of any of the following reasons? *(Circle one on each line.)*

	Yes	No
a. Possession or use of a firearm	1	2
b. Possession or use of weapon other than a firearm	1	2
c. Possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or drugs (excluding tobacco)	1	2
d. Arrest or involvement with juvenile justice system	1	2
e. Physical attacks or fights	1	2
f. Disruptive verbal behavior	1	2
g. Chronic truancy	1	2
h. Continual academic failure	1	2
i. Pregnancy/teen parenthood	1	2
j. Mental health needs	1	2
k. Other*(specify)*_____	1	2

10. To what extent are **special education students with IEPs** placed in alternative schools or programs through each of the following means? *If you have no special education students, check here* ☐ *and skip to question 11. (Circle one on each line.)*

Means of placement	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
a. Support of Director of Special Education (district level)	1	2	3	4
b. IEP team decision	1	2	3	4
c. Regular school staff recommendation (e.g., teacher, administrator, or counselor)	1	2	3	4
d. Student request	1	2	3	4
e. Parent request	1	2	3	4
f. As a result of Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)	1	2	3	4
g. Referral by the juvenile justice system	1	2	3	4
h. Other*(specify)*_____	1	2	3	4

11. Is it your district's policy to allow students enrolled in alternative schools and programs to return to a regular school in your district? *(Circle one.)*

a. Yes, for all students	1	*(Continue with question 12.)*
b. Yes, for some students	2	*(Continue with question 12.)*
c. No, never for any students	3	*(Skip to question 13.)*

12. According to your district's policy, how important are each of the following in determining whether a student is able to return to a regular school? *(Circle one on each line.)*

Factor	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important
a. Improved grades	1	2	3
b. Improved attitude/behavior	1	2	3
c. Student motivation to return	1	2	3
d. Student readiness as measured by a standardized assessment	1	2	3
e. Availability of space in regular school	1	2	3
f. Approval of the regular school administrator or counselor	1	2	3
g. Approval of alternative school/program staff (e.g., teacher, administrator, or counselor)	1	2	3
h. Other*(specify)*_____	1	2	3

IV. Staffing

13. Were any of the teachers in your district's alternative schools and programs... *(Circle one on each line.)*

	Yes	No
a. Hired specifically to teach in alternative schools and programs?	1	2
b. Transferred by choice from a regular school to an alternative school or program?	1	2
c. Involuntarily assigned to teach in an alternative school or program?	1	2

V. Curriculum and Services Offered

14. According to district policy, are any of the following services or practices required to be made routinely available in alternative schools and programs? *(Circle one on each line.)*

	Yes	No
a. Smaller class size than regular schools	1	2
b. Remedial instruction for students performing below grade level	1	2
c. Academic counseling	1	2
d. Career counseling	1	2
e. Psychological counseling	1	2
f. Crisis/behavioral intervention	1	2
g. Social work services	1	2
h. Peer mediation	1	2
i. Extended school day or school year	1	2
j. Evening or weekend classes	1	2
k. Curricula leading toward a regular high school diploma	1	2
l. Preparation for the GED exam	1	2
m. Vocational or skills training	1	2
n. Opportunity to take classes at other schools, colleges, or local institutions	1	2
o. Security personnel on site	1	2
p. Opportunity for self-paced instruction	1	2
q. Other *(specify)* _____	1	2

15. Does your district collaborate with any of the following agencies to provide services to students in alternative schools and programs? *(Circle one on each line.)*

	Yes	No
a. Child protective services	1	2
b. Community mental health agency	1	2
c. Community organization	1	2
d. Job placement center	1	2
e. Crisis intervention center	1	2
f. Drug and/or alcohol clinic	1	2
g. Family organizations or associations	1	2
h. Family planning/child care/child placement agency	1	2
i. Health and human services agency or hospital	1	2
j. Juvenile justice system	1	2
k. Parks and recreation department	1	2
l. Police or sheriff's department	1	2
m. Other *(specify)* _____	1	2

VI. Background Question About Schools in Your District

16. What percent of the students in your district are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch? _____percent

THANK YOU! PLEASE KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

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